

## The Church's Teaching about the Nature of Natural Law and how it begins with the Church's Teaching about the Nature of the Human Mind

Lonergan Institute for the “Good Under Construction” © 2017

### Some Introductory Remarks<sup>1</sup>

Universal law is the law of nature. For there really is, as everyone to some extent divines, a natural justice and injustice that is binding on all men, even on those who have no association or covenant with each other.<sup>2</sup> [However, as regards determining a universal law of nature that can be used to determine what is right or just with respect to our human behavior] That which is *proper* to each thing is *by nature* best and most pleasant for each thing [*italics mine*].<sup>3</sup>

To speak about natural law (*lex naturalis*) in an exhaustive manner should immediately point to the necessity of a book (a well written dissertation) and, if efforts are made to see what has been already published, we should soon discover that many texts and sources can be consulted. Much has been written about the nature of natural law *to the extent that some persons are willing to admit that such a thing exists*. Hence, for pedagogical reasons, I would like to refrain from too ambitious an undertaking and, instead, make a few remarks that could be more apt if our object is an initial point of departure that could lead to later studies that would be more exacting and precise. I begin therefore by speaking in a somewhat impressionistic, colloquial manner in order to indicate my initial point of view (my beliefs

---

<sup>1</sup>Please find notes that have been put together at the request of one of our students here at the Lonergan Institute (based in Washington DC) in an effort to move toward an understanding of natural law as natural law exists as an element within the teaching of the Catholic Church. These notes have not been proofread by other persons and, for this reason and other considerations, pertinent corrective suggestions would be appreciatively received.

<sup>2</sup>Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.13.1373b5, as cited by David S. Oderberg, “The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Law,” *Natural Moral Law in Contemporary Society*, ed. H. Zaborowski (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), p. 44. Similarly, in his *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3, Damien Keown refers to how, in Buddhist circles, there exists a teaching about the universality of belief in the existence of natural law although according to a way of speaking which talks about Dharma:

The ultimate foundation for Buddhist ethics is Dharma. Dharma has many meanings, but the underlying notion is of a universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe. Dharma can best be translated as 'natural law,' a term that captures both its main senses, namely as the principle of order and regularity seen in the behavior of natural phenomena, and also the idea of a universal moral law whose requirements have been revealed by enlightened beings such as the Buddha (note that Buddha claimed only to have discovered Dharma, not to have invented it).

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10, 7, 1178a5-6, as quoted by Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), p. 25.

and judgments) and then, after initially speaking in a somewhat loose manner, I would like to shift into a more technical, serious form of discussion. We would move from common apprehensions of meaning that are given to us, somewhat in a piecemeal fashion, as we live and grow up within a given cultural order, and then, from there, we move toward possible apprehensions of meaning that can be given to us through forms of inquiry that would require considerable study and attention and a willingness to move beyond ambiguities that are proper to our inherited, ordinary ways of thinking and speaking.

As a concrete point of departure then, we can all admit that, often, persons speak about human nature and assume that such a thing exists. Allegedly, it is human nature that persons behave in a particular way, good or bad, although, if we stop to think about it, in our ordinary ways of speaking, human nature is often invoked in order to refer to disordered forms of human behavior. However, in a strange kind of way, in human nature, something normative is also being referred to. We refer to characteristic ways of behaving and acting. Dogs act in a certain way because they happen to be dogs. They have a distinct nature (they are dogs and not cats) and, as human beings, we also behave in a certain way because we happen to exist as human beings. There are certain things that we do, good or bad, which can only come from us as human beings. It is said, for instance, that only human beings can experience anger. Certain kinds of anger can only be experienced by how we exist as human beings or because we exist as human beings.

Going back then, when I think about my personal life, the first time that I can recall encountering a reference to natural law was in the context of reading an editorial in one of the popular journals or newspapers that were commonly available to most persons within the kind of social order that I was living in at that time in Canada (in the 1960s). Perhaps, it was an editorial in *Time* magazine. In 1968, Pope Paul VI had issued *Humanae Vitae*, an encyclical which re-affirmed traditional Catholic Church teaching about the wrongfulness of contraception (using artificial methods of birth control). This decision seemed to surprise most persons (I was surprised by it too as a teenager then, age 17) since prior media reports were suggesting that a change in church teaching was in the offing. But, no change occurred and I accepted the truth of the Pope's teaching on the grounds of the obedience that is owed by us as Catholics to the pronouncements of the Holy See on matters that have to do with faith and morals (definitions or determinations of this teaching). The editorial in question commented on the teaching of this encyclical and it noted that, in its argumentation, appeals were made to the existence of natural law and that this kind of teaching is difficult to understand if one is not a Catholic. Outsiders would be puzzled by it and so, in this context, I first sensed that references to natural law and the use of natural law arguments is to be regarded as some kind of "Catholic thing." It is something that Catholics do. It belongs to their intellectual and moral culture.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it rates as a kind of eccentricity that is peculiar

---

<sup>4</sup>For evidence to this effect, see Tatha Wiley's book, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (New York/Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 2002), pp. 94-95, where, in talking about the consequences of Original Sin, Tatha distinguishes between the woundedness of our created human nature versus the corruption, the depravity, or the overthrow of our created human nature. The official teaching of the Catholic Church speaks about loss of grace as a consequence of Original Sin, the sin of Adam. As a consequence of Adam's first sin (his sin of disobedience), our inherited human nature is to be viewed as having been harmed. It has been wounded. Hence, we speak about a darkening of our intellects (the fallibility of our understanding) and a weakening of our human wills (the lure of our selfish tendencies) although, in the Catholic view, this human nature of ours is not completely destroyed in its essential wholeness or integrity. It is not entirely subverted or undone in

to Catholics as a group. At the time, of course, I did not have much of an understanding of natural law. It seemed to me then, however, that, in our Catholic understanding of things, apart from revelation, we can have an understanding of things, a possible understanding of ourselves, that can become a part of Church teaching or, in some way, it is already *implicitly* a part of church teaching. This inchoate kind of thinking and believing emerged only in an articulate way however some years later when, in my last year of doing an honors BA in Political Science at the University of New Brunswick, I was forced to read through Plato's *Republic*. We were all required to take a course in political philosophy and so, well, why not read Plato's *Republic* and do a report on it? And so, I read this text for the first time and I was amazed by it. The author, Plato, came across to me as a Catholic. In his thinking and analysis, it seemed quite obvious to me that he thought like a Catholic even if, yes, he was a Greek philosopher, a pagan no less! I told my professor this (the professor was not a Catholic although his wife was a Catholic) and, in his own way, he admitted the truth of my conclusion. In other words, traditional Catholic teaching on just about any topic is suffused with forms of analysis and ways of thinking that are borrowed and adapted from philosophical forms of reasoning and thinking. If one has received a traditional kind of Catholic upbringing, even if one has begun with a form of training that principally works with acts of memorization and a text that gives a list of short questions and answers that are to be memorized, nonetheless, in a mediated kind of way or, indirectly, a young person's mind is being formed in a way which is open to philosophical forms of inquiry and discussion. A positive relation exists between exacting forms of human thinking and analysis and teachings which belong to a deposit of faith (a set of religious beliefs) which point to truths that are known because they have been divinely revealed to us (revealed by God through ways and means that have been thought to be most fitting for us as human beings who are supposed to exist as religious believers). "Man cannot live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)." Hence, after reading Plato and discovering the value of philosophical analysis and inquiry, at that time, I decided to move into philosophy as a new kind of home (a place where I needed to dwell). From the glimmerings that we encounter in philosophy, in the distance, we can sense the heights of theology and the ascent that we

---

how it functions or operates although, admittedly, it has been gravely weakened and impaired and so, without the help of God's gift of grace, as human beings, we will not long persevere in virtue and be able to avoid sin. In our creaturely condition, we cannot hope to avoid sin for too long a period of time. However, as a controversial point of contrast, if we attend to a Lutheran understanding about the consequences of Original Sin as we will find this in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century teachings of Martin Luther, we will find a point of view which speaks more radically about the evil consequences of Adam's sin, consequences that are far more sweeping and all encompassing. The goodness or the integrity of our created human nature is entirely lost and destroyed and nothing can therefore be said about any kind of natural goodness that would allegedly continue to exist for us in our human being and living, apart from our salvation and possible receptions of divine grace that are essentially necessary for us if we are to live any kind of holy, virtuous life (doing good deeds and avoiding every kind of spiritual and moral evil). Hence, in the wake of theologies of grace which would deny that our human nature continues to exist within human history with a degree of integrity or a measure of wholeness which, in some way, properly belongs to it (it has not been entirely lost to us), then, within this other context, we can understand why arguments which speak about the legitimacy or the morality of natural law are not to be accepted or appreciated for any kind of worth or value that could possibly belong to them. There is nothing to be gained with respect to any kind of understanding which could possibly contribute or which could be employed in a way that could resolve some of our human problems and difficulties or which could point us in other directions, toward other possible solutions which could be available to us if we should decide to engage in other kinds of human inquiry.

can experience as, through our work in philosophy, we can move toward a higher order of things, the higher things referring to the things of God and the kind of life that is possible for us through the gift and the practice of our holy Catholic faith.

However, if I can refer now more directly to the question of natural law, I would like to make two points. First, yes, in Catholic circles, traditionally, natural law arguments are looked upon with favor (though we have yet to have much of an understanding about what exactly is a natural law argument). On the other hand too, outside the Catholic world, this type of thinking seems to be largely rejected and disregarded. At times, it is disparaged and ridiculed. I say “seems” or “tends” since exceptions can be found. They exist. However, before we attend to the existence of this type of criticism and rejection, it would be of help to document (to some degree) what exactly is the Catholic preference and appreciation of natural law as something that we should legitimately do and first attend to if our object, as Catholics, is a deeper understanding of such things (a more persuasive understanding of the good or the value which exists in natural law) which would then, in turn, point to a mysterious inner link which somehow exists between the truths of faith, on the one hand, that come to us from God through a form of divine communication which is known as Revelation, and the truths of reason, on the other hand, which also come to us from God (although by a route that employs different means, a different set of secondary causes). At this point, we tend to think that Revelation employs fewer secondary causes than the number of causes that are used if we should refer to that which we can know about through the use and the exercise of our human reason (although, if we should prefer one theory of reason over another theory of reason, an intuitive understanding of human reason rather than a discursive understanding of human reason, fewer secondary causes would be adverted to if we should think about our cognition in terms which speak about the immediacy of intuition). If we should try to argue that, loosely speaking, Revelation occurs without benefit or the use of any secondary causes, an understanding of human cognition which thinks in terms of intuition would similarly assume or believe that secondary causes are not to be adverted to. They are not to be acknowledged. In their own way, yes, in a very limited way, we can say that secondary causes exist. However, the givens which exist with respect to acts and data of experience are such that they *immediately* trigger an experience of understanding. They immediately lead to an experience of understanding or, more accurately, we would say that, in their own way or in some way, they *occasion* our acts of understanding or *growth* in our acts of understanding where, for an experience of understanding or a growth in our knowledge, any given of data suffices as a species of external cause despite the particularity which always belongs to the use or the reception of any kind of external cause. However, if the order or the structure of our human cognition is understood more fully, if the discursiveness of our understanding is adverted to and if its truth is admitted and accepted, we can begin to wonder too if the discursiveness of our human knowing is something which applies to how, as human beings, we also come to know about the truth of divinely revealed truths, moving toward a familiarity which would exist for us as faith and belief.

Moving to a second point, with respect to what the Church teaches about natural law and where it sits amid a larger general scheme of things, a somewhat odd and strange fact presents itself to us when we notice or as we notice that, historically, within the data and the content of the Church's teaching as this has come down to us from past decisions and judgments that have been issued by the Church's teaching office (the Magisterium), either nothing is said explicitly about the meaning of natural law or the existence of natural law or, when we find that something is said about natural law (where references are made to the being of natural law), the references occur with a timing and frequency that is somewhat late or which is somewhat recent if we attend to the order of exposition which we find with respect to the content of the Church's teaching and doctrine.

If we attend to the teaching of the papal Magisterium, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it is rare to find any explicit references to “natural law” or other references that are implicit in the way that they point to the meaning and the being of natural law.<sup>5</sup> By way of evidence here: in 1459, in a letter *Cum sicut*, Pope Pius II indirectly refers to the principle of natural law in the context of a normative proscription which rules against the rightness of engaging in any kind of sexual intercourse in a context which is other than the condition and state of marriage. In the point which is made, the wrongness of extramarital intercourse is not solely determined by proscriptions that come from ecclesiastical prohibitions of one kind or another (cited as “positive law,” the Church’s “positive law”).<sup>6</sup> A first explicit reference to “natural law” apparently comes to us from Pope Innocent XI in 1679. The context was a decree of the Holy Office on *Various Errors on Moral Subjects*.<sup>7</sup> Within this decree, the immediate context was a reiteration of earlier teaching on the impropriety of extramarital intercourse. Two features are to be noticed. (1) In the teaching which is given, “nature” and “reason” are mentioned for the first time. The nature of fornication is alluded to and also the reliability of our human reason as a source of knowledge in moral matters with respect to how, in this case, it rules against the legitimacy of extramarital intercourse as a reasonable human option in the conduct of our individual human lives. Our reason, through its own reflections and operations, rejects the rightness of extramarital intercourse as a valid moral option (in conjunction too with proscriptions against the same that are also known if we should refer to the precepts of church law, the Church’s “positive law”).<sup>8</sup> (2) “Natural law” is then mentioned for the first time in teaching which condemns a proposition which says that masturbation is “not prohibited by the law of nature.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the contrary is to be admitted as true: “masturbation (*mollietas*) contradicts the natural law.”<sup>10</sup> Not long afterwards, a second direct reference to the being of “natural law” comes in 1690 when, in a decree of the Holy Office, Pope Alexander VIII condemns a number of propositions which have been ascribed to the machinations of Jansenist teaching.<sup>11</sup> A rigorist proposition is excluded and rejected which had said that violations of “natural law” are always formally sinful even if they are committed by persons who are acting in ignorance.<sup>12</sup>

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century however, a change occurs when references to “natural law” become much more frequent.<sup>13</sup> The context is the pontificate and the teaching of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) where “natural law” is referred to in a number of different contexts: in texts and speeches which refer

---

5Josef Fuchs, *Natural Law: A Theological Investigation*, trans. Helmut Reckter and John A Dowling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 4.

6Pope Pius II, *Cum sicut*, November 14, 1459, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2007), p. 233, #717g.

7Pope Innocent XI, decree of the Holy Office, *Various Errors on Moral Subjects* [sometimes cited by other sources as *Errors of Laxist Morality*], March 4, 1679, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 325-329, #1151-1216.

8Pope Innocent XI, decree of the Holy Office, March 4, 1679, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 328, #1198.

9Pope Innocent XI, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 328, #1199.

10Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 4, n. 4.

11Pope Alexander VIII, decree of the Holy Office, *Errors of the Jansenists*. December 7, 1690, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 339, #1292.

12Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 4, n. 5.

13Fuchs, *Natural Law*, pp. 4-5.

to some controversial aspects of neo-malthusianist teaching, the foundations of civil law, the indissolubility of marriage, and the possibility of salvation for those who are outside the Church. In 1851, the Pope Pius IX cites and condemns a thesis which says that “by natural law the bond of matrimony is not indissoluble, and in various cases divorce, properly so-called, can be sanctioned by civil authority.”<sup>14</sup> The wording of this condemnation is subsequently repeated in 1852 and 1864. In 1862, a papal allocution cites and condemns a thesis which claims that human laws have not to “conform to the natural law.”<sup>15</sup> A papal encyclical, *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, issued in 1863, reiterates a commonly accepted teaching which comes to us originally from a provincial council of about 30 bishops which had met in the city of Arles in France possibly in the year 475 or in 480. In the text of the conciliar decree as this has come down to us, the teachings of a priest, Lucidus, on the nature of predestination are condemned and, in the wording of this decree, “natural law” is referred to in a way which points to its reality and also to its goodness as a norm and guide for the conduct of our human lives. The “law of nature” is cited as “the first grace of God” [*per primam Dei gratiam*] and, by it, “from Adam even to Christ,” prior to the coming of Christ (*in adventum Christi*), nations have been saved and rescued from the possibility of eternal damnation.<sup>16</sup> Citing further: “By reason and through the regular succession of the centuries some have been saved by the law of grace, others by the law of Moses, others by the law of nature, which God has written in the hearts of all [according to Romans 2:15],<sup>17</sup> in the expectation of the coming of Christ.” Hence, through the repetition and the reiteration of the teaching on the part of Pope Pius IX (as this was given to us in 1863), the teaching of Arles received an explicit form of papal confirmation: a ratification which points to a belief in the being and the goodness of natural law which has long existed within the Catholic world before these same beliefs received a form of reference and an articulation that was directly given to them by the teaching of later Roman popes, beginning apparently in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries but flowering in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond. As Pope Pius IX confirms the teaching of the Council of Arles in 1863: “they who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion and who, zealously keeping the natural law and its precepts engraved in the hearts of all by God, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, by the operating power of divine light and grace, attain eternal life.”<sup>18</sup> With respect then to how teachings about natural law have been assumed into the later texts of subsequent papal teaching in a manner which points to a larger acceptance (natural law exists as a legitimate part of the Church's true belief and teaching):

Aside from early Leonine references which reiterate earlier teaching (from popes and bishops) to the effect that natural law exists (in one context thus: there exists both “divine and natural law”),<sup>19</sup> and that certain things exist in the way that they do by

---

<sup>14</sup>Pope Pius IX, *Ad apostolicae*, August 22, 1851, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 441, #1767.

<sup>15</sup>Pope Pius IX, *Maxima quidem* August 22, 1851, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 440, #1756.

<sup>16</sup>Council of Arles 475, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 65-66, #160a-160b; Russell Hittinger, *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2007), p. xi.

<sup>17</sup>Hittinger, *The First Grace*, p. xi.

<sup>18</sup>Pope Pius IX, *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 425, #1677.

<sup>19</sup>Early in his pontificate, in a decree of the Holy Office (“On the Reception of Converted Heretics”) which was issued on November 20, 1878, Pope Leo XIII refers to “natural law” in noting

*nature* (for example, “by its nature,” marriage is monogamous),<sup>20</sup> in another step which is taken, possibly the earliest *extended reference* to natural law comes to us from 1888 when, in an encyclical entitled *Libertas praestantissimum*, Pope Leo XIII refers to the existence of “natural law” and where it is to be found (i.e., within ourselves as human beings): according to his words, “the natural law is written and engraved in the soul of each and every man, because it is human reason ordaining him to do good and forbidding him to sin.”<sup>21</sup> In a sense, our human reason is referred to as the natural law.<sup>22</sup> Each exists as the other. The nature and being of natural law is determined by man's nature and destination.<sup>23</sup> According to Pope Pius XI, by the use of our reason, through a kind of self-inquiry, as human beings, we can read or we can come upon this natural law as it is written in our hearts, at least in so far as we are not blinded by weight of sin and the sway of passion.<sup>24</sup> Later, in 1950, according to his encyclical *Humani generis*, Pope Pius XII speaks about how our “human reason...by its natural powers and light can in fact arrive at true and certain knowledge...of the natural law [that is] infused into our souls by the Creator.”<sup>25</sup> This natural law, because it exists thus within ourselves in a discoverable way and because it also exists within the nature of existing things which exist apart from ourselves (as the Pope was to note in an allocution that was given in 1956, the natural law is “written into the nature of beings”)<sup>26</sup> - this natural law is such thus that, between the order of our human knowing in the manner of its self-transcendence and the transcendent and proportionate order of being which is grasped by this same order of knowing, an overlap, a correspondence, a unity, a communion, a common order of intelligibility exists which can be referred to in ways which would simply refer to it as the being of natural law.<sup>27</sup> On the basis of this papal teaching thus,

---

that “divine and natural law” both exist. These two kinds of law are distinguished from each other in a context which pejoratively refers to “decisions of legislators and princes” which could possibly “order something that is contrary to divine and natural law.” Cf. Pope Leo XIII, “The Reception of Converted Heretics,” as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 461, #1850.

20Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 7, citing Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum*, ASS 12 (1879 ff.) 388.

21Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, 597, as cited by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), p. 474, #1954.

22Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 7, citing Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas*, ASS 20 (1887) 597.

23Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 7, citing Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas*, ASS 20 (1887) 597.

24Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 7, citing Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge*, ASS 29 (1937) 159.

25Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis*, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 635, #2305.

26Fuchs, *Natural Law*, p. 7, citing Pope Pius XII, Allocution, 19 May 1956, ASS 44 (1952)

784.

27Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, [1950]), p. 15, #33. In speaking about the kind of communion which exists between the self-transcendence of our human reason (the self-transcendence of our human cognition) and the transcendence of the natural law that is known through this cognition, Pope Pius employs a technical term that he takes from Aquinas (citing from the *Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 35, a. 2) where Aquinas had spoken about “connaturality” and its relevance when we want to speak about the ordering of our human cognition in terms of how, normally, or how, in its fullness, it is always directed toward an understanding of higher things (whether we speak about higher things which are proportionate to the right exercise of our human cognition or things which exist at levels which surpass or which are disproportionate to the right exercise of our human reason in the manner of its cognition). Within the

the conciliar teaching of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, in *Gaudium et Spes*, is able to speak about “the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all embracing principles.”<sup>28</sup> On the basis then of the kind of prior conditioning which has been emerging from the accumulation of recent papal and conciliar teaching, the greater emphasis which is given to the being and goodness of natural law accordingly explains why, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992, so much is said about “the laws of nature” within a larger section of text which refers to “The Natural Moral Law.”<sup>29</sup> In this catechism, more is said explicitly about the meaning of natural law than what we can find in earlier magisterial texts if we compare the texts of this catechism with what can be found in earlier texts that have been issued by the Magisterium when something is being said about the meaning and the existence of natural law. The accumulated evidence accordingly points to a recent amplitude of teaching which, in turn, points to an earlier paucity of church teaching about that which exists for us as the meaning and being of natural law.

Hence, with respect to the meaning and the existence of natural law, as a consequence of the paucity of church teaching as this has existed until rather recent times, we find that we are at a disadvantage if our object is to locate the length and breathe of the Church's teaching in order to present it in a manner which could then point to all of its many parameters (the depth of its meaning, its parts, and its significance). From the intelligibility of natural law (as this is known by us or as it can be known by us in our study), we should then have an argument which could immediately point to its reasonableness and then, from there, to its validity (its merits, its intelligibility pointing to its persuasiveness). The persuasiveness should indicate why we should believe in the possible being, the goodness, and the value of natural law or, more elliptically, why we should believe in that which would exist for us as natural law or why we should believe in that which we mean and intend if we should ever want speak about that which could be the meaning and the being of natural law.

On the other hand however, the paucity of church teaching at the same time also points to a prior lack of controversy which had existed about what could have been the being, the meaning, and the purpose of natural law and the kind of existence which properly belongs to the meaning of natural law arguments. With respect to possible questions about the appropriateness and the legitimacy of natural law (its proper role and place), it seems then that, for a very long time, no one was raising any

---

kind of spirit or the kind of intentionality which exists within the life of our human cognition, an infinite desire exists for any possible union that, possibly, can be enjoyed with the being of transcendent realities. Between the nature of our human cognition and the transcendent nature of natural laws, an intelligibility is shared (in common) and it belongs to the nature of our human cognition that it should be joined to the transcendent kind of intelligibility which exists within the meaning and the being of natural law. The intelligibility that belongs to the nature of our human cognition belongs to the meaning and being of natural law even as we admit and know that the meaning and being of natural law exists as a larger, greater thing.

<sup>28</sup>Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* [the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*], promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, as cited in *The Documents of Vatican II with notes and index*, Vatican translation (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls Publications, 2009), p. 188, #79.

<sup>29</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), p. 474, #1954-#1960.



questions or objections which could pose any problems or difficulties for the belief of Catholics with respect to the possible validity of natural law (no problems or difficulties for the kind of faith which the Church has been proclaiming to all men and women for the sake of their eternal salvation, in the hope of obtaining their eternal salvation). In the absence of any contrary evidence (in the absence of explicit teachings), we cannot conclude or suppose that, within the life of the Church, a belief in natural law is not to be found or that it is not to be adverted to as something which exists as a kind of underground stream, undergirding and supporting how, by her Magisterium, the Church teaches about divine things and how we are to relate to these divine things as human beings. Differences in the use of language, the use of different conceptualities,<sup>30</sup> does not in itself point to ways of thinking and believing that are necessarily estranged from a belief in the reality and the goodness of natural law (even if, in our current context, in the context of this paper, we have yet to understand what it means for us if we should try to speak about the meaning and the significance of natural law).

To understand this point a bit more clearly (with a lesser degree of ambiguity), please distinguish here between teaching that has been inerrantly and infallibly *defined* through *extraordinary* acts of the Church's Magisterium and teaching which has been inerrantly and infallibly *presented* for the belief and acceptance of all Christians through *ordinary* acts of the Church's Magisterium. For examples that illustrate the first kind of teaching, in 325, the Council of Nicea defined that God the Son is related to God the Father in terms of consubstantiality. Each shares the same divinity. The divinity of one is not lesser or greater than the divinity of the other. Later, in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council (in a credal statement) spoke about a transubstantial kind of change which occurs when, at Mass, bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. This kind of change precludes any teaching that would want to speak about a material kind of change and any teaching that would want to speak about a symbolic kind of change. In order to forestall any determinations of meaning which can never be true, inerrant definitions of doctrine are issued from time to time by popes and church councils as the need for them arises within the history of the Church.

However, on the other hand, other teachings exist which have been commonly and consistently taught throughout the entire Church *ubique, semper, et ab omnibus* [everywhere, always, and by all] by all bishops who have been and who are in communion with their head, the Pope, who is cited by the Union Council of Florence in

---

<sup>30</sup>For reference purposes here, see the teaching of Pope Pius XII in *Humani generis*, 16 which notes, according to an official translation that is given, that “the Church itself has not always used the same terms in the same way.” Cf. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_12081950\\_humani-generis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html) (accessed October 5, 2017). An alternative translation is given by Josef Neuner and Heinrich Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church as contained in her documents*, Karl Rahner, ed., trans. Geoffrey Stevens (New York: Pauline Fathers and Brothers of the Society of St. Paul, 1966), p. 47, to the effect that “it is notorious that the Church has not always been consistent in the use of the same identical phrases.” The Church's Magisterium, in the person of Pope Pius XII, in a later encyclical (*Sempiternus rex*), issued in 1951, notes and argues that, as the need emerges, the Church's Magisterium introduce clarifications at times in the use of terms and concepts. This is done to ensure the truth of the Church's teaching and to reduce any ambiguous references which could possibly threaten the truth of the Church's teaching in terms of how it is understood and communicated. Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, pp. 50-51.

1439 as the “father and teacher of all Christians,”<sup>31</sup> and so, with respect to these teachings, it has not been thought that it has been necessary to engage in the kind of exactitude and care which is needed if definitions are to be constructed for the assent and the acceptance of all the Church's faithful. The unanimity which has existed through time and space points to the inerrancy of a teaching which has always been held and believed. For this reason thus and as an example, the Church's teaching about the wrongfulness of contraception is to be regarded as a species of inerrant teaching.<sup>32</sup> The infallibility of the Church's teaching authority is expressed in this manner and not solely or necessarily in a manner which must always directly refer to the *ex cathedra* judgments of individual Popes or the solemn pronouncements and judgments of ecumenical Councils. At times, yes, the charism of infallibility is directly invoked in the promulgation of the Church's teaching; but, at other times, its presence is assumed and it is supposed since the infallibility of the Magisterium is something which can exist in either an implicit, latent way or in a manner which is bold, direct, and extraordinary.<sup>33</sup>

---

31Pope Eugenius IV, *Laetentur coeli* (issued July 6, 1439), as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 219, #691. For an initial introduction about what can be said and known about the ordinary Magisterium, the acts and the authority of the Church's ordinary teaching office, see John Trigilio and Kenneth Brighenti, *Catholicism for Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing Inc., 2003), pp. 30-32.

32Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae A Generation Later* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), pp. 155-160.

33Citing teaching that is given to us through the “Commentary on the Profession of Faith's Concluding Paragraphs, *Professio Fidei*” (which was issued by the Holy See on June 29, 1998 by way of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith):

The Magisterium of the Church, however, teaches a doctrine to be *believed as divinely revealed* (first paragraph) or to be *held definitively* (second paragraph) with an act which is either *defining* or *non-defining*. In the case of a *defining* act, a truth is solemnly defined by an 'ex cathedra' pronouncement by the Roman Pontiff or by the action of an ecumenical council. In the case of a *non-defining* act, a doctrine is taught *infallibly* by the ordinary and universal Magisterium of the Bishops dispersed throughout the world who are in communion with the Successor of Peter. *Such a doctrine can be confirmed or reaffirmed by the Roman Pontiff, even without recourse to a solemn definition*, by declaring explicitly that it belongs to the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium as a truth that is divinely revealed (first paragraph) or as a truth of Catholic doctrine (second paragraph). Consequently, when there has not been a judgement on a doctrine in the solemn form of a definition, but this doctrine, belonging to the inheritance of the *depositum fidei*, is taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, which necessarily includes the Pope, such a doctrine is to be understood as having been set forth infallibly. The declaration of *confirmation or reaffirmation* by the Roman Pontiff in this case is not a new dogmatic definition, but a formal attestation of a truth already possessed and infallibly transmitted by the Church.

With respect thus to the Church's teaching about natural law and how the Church has taught about the meaning and the existence of natural law, because the extraordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium have always supposed prior ordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium and the content of this ordinary teaching, the later references to natural law which we find in subsequent declarations of popes and councils presuppose a mass of earlier teaching about the meaning and the truth of natural law although, in moving from ordinary to extraordinary teaching, the manner of expression is now explicit and precise or perhaps we can say that the manner of expression is more explicit than what it had been before. An outer, externalized word more fully expresses the meaning of an inner, internal word or perhaps, for the first time, an outer word externalizes an inner word or it communicates the meaning of an inner word which, before, had never been put into a form of articulate expression that was seen to be adequate or satisfactory.<sup>34</sup>

---

In addition, according to the attached footnote #17, it is said as follows:

It should be noted that the infallible teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium is not only set forth with an explicit declaration of a doctrine to be believed or held definitively, but is also expressed by a doctrine implicitly contained in a practice of the Church's faith, derived from revelation or, in any case, necessary for eternal salvation, and attested to by the uninterrupted Tradition: such an infallible teaching is thus objectively set forth by the whole episcopal body, understood in a diachronic and not necessarily merely synchronic sense. Furthermore, the intention of the ordinary and universal Magisterium to set forth a doctrine as definitive is not generally linked to technical formulations of particular solemnity; it is enough that this be clear from the tenor of the words used and from their context.

For an explanation about the nature of this ordinary universal teaching authority (although it was written before the issue of the "Commentary on the Profession of Faith's Concluding Paragraphs, *Professio Fidei*" in 1998), see Giovanni B. Sala S.J., "Fallible Teachings and the Assistance of the Holy Spirit. Reflections on the Ordinary Magisterium in Connection with the Instruction on „The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," <http://lonergan.org/wp-content/2010/03/InfallibleChurch.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2015).

<sup>34</sup>In order the better to understand how we can move through a history of the Church's teaching as this touches on the question and meaning of natural law, as a point of departure for understanding this history, please distinguish between an act of understanding (specifically, an act of direct understanding) and an initial or a first act of conceptualization which refers to the proceeding of an inner word or concept and then, after this, please distinguish between the proceeding of an inner word and the proceeding of an outer word which refers to another species (a second species) of conceptualizing act. These distinctions are best known (they are best understood by us) if, through a thought experiment, we can take up a problem in mathematics and try to solve it, noticing what happens when we try to solve it. For instance: if we draw two parallel lines and if we draw a diagonal line through these parallel lines, we might want to determine how a given angle "x" relates or compares to another angle "y." We can draw other lines to try and find a determining answer and, at a certain

In the kind of ordering which exists or in the kind of presupposition which exists as we move from ordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium to extraordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium, a hermeneutical principle normatively guides our understanding, indicating the kind of understanding and interpretation which we can have and which we should attend to. The prior, implicit teaching of the Church indicates how we are to understand the later teaching of the Church as this refers to the question of natural law and, at the same time or in a way, conversely, the Church's explicit teaching about natural law guides us in how we are to understand the movement and shape of the earlier teaching (to where, or in what direction, this teaching has been headed and from where

---

point, we could perhaps notice or we should perhaps notice that, when we find or draw a suggestive apt image (a phantasm in the language of Aquinas), in the givenness of this image, it should be immediately obvious to us that this angle "x" must always equal this angle "y." Through our inquiry, at a certain point, we experience or we receive an act of understanding and, immediately in this act, we grasp that "x" must always equal "y". In this grasp or in this experience of an intellectual necessity, we solve a mathematical problem. The experience of this intellectual necessity immediately points us to something which exists for us as an act of understanding. However, as we attend to our inner intellectual experience, with care, if we are alert, we should also notice that, in the wake of an act of understanding that solves a problem, we also experience another kind of intellectual act which differs from a prior direct act of understanding: an intellectual act which immediately flows or which results from our prior act of understanding, our prior act of understanding existing for us as a species of first principle (the first of an ordered set of distinct variables, the first of an ordered set of distinct acts). Immediately in the wake of our problem solving act of understanding in mathematics, we notice or we should find that we are aware of the presence of an invariant mathematical law. This awareness points to the proceeding of an inner word which, as a species of intellectual act, is to be distinguished from prior acts of understanding. In the *De Trinitate* of St. Augustine, a number of texts refer to a mysterious inner word which differs both from the language of articulate speech and also from the kind of inner dialogue that we all engage in when we inwardly talk to ourselves in order to solve a difficult problem. For example, from *De Trinitate* 19, 11, n. 20, as cited by Frederick E. Crowe, *Loneragan and the Level of Our Time*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 17-18:

If anyone wishes to find some likeness of the Word of God...let him not study the word that sounds in our ears, or the word that is uttered with the lips, or the word that is formed imaginatively in the silence of the mind (for the words of all audible languages can be thought in silence, and we run through songs in our imagination [animo], while the lips say nothing)... But we must transcend all these... We must come to that human word, the word of a *rationaly-souled being*...that does not issue in sound, and is not formed by fantasy in the likeness of sound, for that has to be done in some determinate language, the word then that precedes all the signs by which it may be manifested. (italics mine)

However, and most importantly from the viewpoint of our perspective as we try to understand how we should speak about the administration of the Church's teaching office and how it speaks about the being and the nature of natural law (a teaching that begins with initial acts of understanding and which then moves into inner words and then, from there, toward the conceptualization of outer words), we

or from what direction it has been originating). Certain developments (insights, understandings) have led the Church toward the kind of understanding that she now currently has and which she is seeking to communicate, employing various ways and means that are now currently available to her.

Hence, on the basis of all these considerations, from this point on, if we are to understand what the Church teaches about the meaning and the being of natural law, we must work in an indirect fashion, extrapolating the gist of the Church's teaching about natural law from what we can come to know about what the Church has been teaching about other issues or other subjects with meanings that are connatural with the meaning or the intelligibility of natural law. Thus: with respect to natural law, we

---

should notice that, while inner words proceed with an immediacy that is endemic to the nature of inner words (a kind of proceeding which belongs to the proceeding of an inner word), the proceeding of outer words does not occur with an immediacy which is somehow similar. At times, yes, it does seem that the vocalization and expression of meaning in external words is something which occurs immediately and spontaneously. But, if we again engage in an introspective form of analysis, we should find that, often, it can be quite difficult for us that we should soon find the right words and phrases that will successfully and accurately convey or express a meaning that we have grasped and understood. If some meanings, in the first place, are difficult to understand, additional acts of understanding will be needed if meanings which have been understood are to be put into an external manner of expression that will be entirely adequate and satisfactory. The meaning of a given idea can be put into different words that vary over time, depending on the kind of analysis that we are using and the approach that we are taking with respect to our point of departure. One type of conceptuality can succeed another species of conceptuality. Compare, for example, Aquinas when he speaks about the human soul as the form of the human body and Wittgenstein when he says that the "human body is the best picture of the human soul." Cf. Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 21, citing Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), p. 178. In Aristotle, moral questions were posed and responded to in a way which worked with metaphysical specifications of meaning (a metaphysical language which speaks and thinks in terms of potency, form, and act). However, the same moral questions can be raised in ways which prefer to work with a language which directly refers to an assembly of psychological data or psychological events or acts of one kind or another. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, in the philosophy of John Locke, for the first time, a neologism spoke about "consciousness" and a definition was given: consciousness as the "perception of what passes in a man's own mind." Cf. Owen Barfield's *History in English Words* (Inner Traditions International, April 1986), pp. 169-171. And so, as a consequence of the kind of order which exists among our acts of understanding and our acts of conceptualization, as we attend to the difference which exists between the meaning of inner words and the meaning of outer words (the difference with respect to the kind of signification which exists), we should understand why we can advert to developments which have occurred through time as we attend to teachings about natural law and how, in varying ways, the Church has spoken about the elements and parameters of natural law and how we are to understand their role and place within a larger scheme of things which refers the order of our redemption and salvation. From developments within the order of conceptualization, new questions emerge and arise, and, in turn, the asking of new questions leads to possible enlargements or additions that are given to the content of our prior understanding which then, in turn, leads to adjustments and expansions in terms of how the Church speaks about the role and place of natural laws (most specifically: how "their observance" leads to our redemption and salvation; how, in fact, they are "necessary" for our "salvation"; and how these laws concretely relate to the needs and the requirements

work with definitions and specifications of meaning that have been articulated at different times by popes and councils who have been faced with challenges that were presented to them about how our acts of religious faith are to be related to our acts of human thinking and reasoning and, conversely, how our acts of human thinking and reasoning are to be related to our acts of religious believing. The life of a religious believer is not supposed to be something that takes away from the fact and the life of our common humanity, the humanity of someone who exists and who is also a religious believer. As religious believers, we all begin our lives as human beings and, from there, we can move into other possibilities, toward other options: either enjoying our humanity more fully (with a greater measure of it) or, on the other hand, withdrawing from the kind of humanity that we could possibly have in ways and measures that presently, we cannot imagine, understand, or fathom. Our given humanity is not lacking in a measure of flexibility that inherently belongs to it. Certain kinds of openness are given to us and, as a consequence of this, we can speak about a potentiality which exists within the actuality of our humanity, a potentiality which exists within the partial or the incomplete actuality of our individual human existence.

For this reason thus, if we can distinguish between who or what we are as religious believers and who and what we are apart from our religious belief (who and what we are apart from having any kind of religious belief), we can move toward an understanding of natural law if we can attend to variables which distinguish our humanity in the condition which always belongs to it. This condition, as it is known and lived, serves to set us apart from every other kind of existing being or thing and it would be presupposed by any kind of transition which would want to move us from a lack of care and concern for religious belief to a life that is grounded and conditioned by a faithful adherence to religious belief and which works from it or which adopts it as a rule of life, constituting a new species of first principle for the kind of life that we would prefer to live and have as human beings. As we think thus about the kind of humanity that we happen to have, we discover that it exists as a species of indemonstrable first principle since, if we were to try to prove its validity or its reality, our attempts to construct arguments would exist as acts of reasoning and understanding that are entirely appropriate to us as human beings, defining and determining the kind of humanity which belongs to us as human beings and which does not belong to any other kind of living thing.

In this inquiry thus, in order to move toward an understanding of natural law, we will begin with a chronological order of Church teaching which starts with a listing of various censures and a number of negative judgments which we will first encounter within the content and data of the Church's official teaching (as this comes down to us from individual popes and councils). As a point of departure, whether for the Church or for anyone else, in moving from an initial condition of indetermination, it is always easier to point to that which one does not believe and hold (that which is believed to be false) before we can possibly move at a later time to that which we believe and hold to be true.<sup>35</sup> In this case, if we should begin with the nature or the inner law of our human reason, before we attend to any positive teachings or any positive judgments that can be found about the nature and the scope of our natural human reason and then how this reason or form of inquiry is to be coordinated or how, in some

---

of our eternal salvation as this salvation comes to us in a way which, through different causes, all ultimately come to us from God). Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 492, #2036.

<sup>35</sup>Pierre Manent, *The City of Man*, trans. Marc A. LePain (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 33: "the tendency of thought is to fashion, simultaneously or successively, the most rigorous negative formulation possible and to seek the positive determination that corresponds or even merges with the negative."

way, it is to be related to any specifications of natural law which would belong to the content of natural law (simply put, how our natural human reason reveals that which exists as natural laws), we will work first from an initial listing of negative judgments about the nature of our human reason and then, by advertent and relying on the principle of excluded middle as a fundamental law of our human thought and as a technique for drawing conclusions that in turn lead to valid inferences, we will then speak about what can be said in a positive way about the nature and scope of our natural human reason (how the Church understands the nature and scope of this natural human reason and how, from this, in due course, later inferences can be drawn about the nature or the intelligibility of natural law and any parts and relations that are constitutive of the intelligibility of natural laws). More specifically:

We attend to how our human reasoning activity or how the work of our reason exists in a manner which is somehow apart and different and so not to be confused with the kind of elevation which could come to it through gratuitous receptions of grace that can be given to us (to our acts of human reasoning) by way of a special form of divine intervention that we can experience: God, through grace, lifting or elevating our acts of reasoning and understanding, bringing them up to a level and giving to them a quality that they would not have otherwise if, in our reasoning and understanding, we should be left to our own devices and if we should try to proceed in a way that is somehow apart from God and which does not turn to God, relying on God for the kind of help which can only come from him (the kind of help which exists if we should speak about grace and the gifts of God's grace and the kind of role that grace plays within the context of our individual human lives). If then, on the one hand, our natural human reasoning exists apart from grace (if it can be attended to in a way which separates it from grace or which distinguishes it from grace), on the other hand but in a similar related way, this same reasoning is something which exists or, more aptly, we would say that it can be attended to in a way which sets it apart from sin. The two go together: sin and grace because grace exists as a remedy for sin. Hence, the Church's teaching about that which exists as our natural acts of human cognition supposes or it implies an understanding which prescind from all questions which would want to introduce theological considerations of one kind or another and the kind of understanding which can be given to us as a possible addition, augmenting that which we should already know and understand if our horizon is in some way restricted to questions that are delimited by a species of inquiry that avoids engaging in inquiries which do not belong to the inquiries of philosophy and science (in this case: science as the study of contingent nature, the study of contingent reality, whether of anything that belongs to the natural sciences or anything that belongs to the human sciences).

First of all then, with respect to our point of departure in terms of the method of our approach, we notice, with respect to the principle or the Law of Excluded Middle that, when any proposition that allegedly states a matter of fact (as in “this is not so” or, oppositely, “this is so”), either the proposition in question is true or its negation is true.<sup>36</sup> Both cannot be both true. If we should have two contradictory propositions that exclude each other (where one proposition is the negation or the denial of the other), then, one must be true and the other must be false.<sup>37</sup> Hence, by applying this law of the

---

36H. W. B. Joseph, *An Introduction to Logic* (Cresskill, NJ: Paper Tiger, Inc., 2000), p. 13.

37Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, c. 9, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_of\\_excluded\\_middle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_excluded_middle) (accessed June 29, 2015).

mind to a proposition which would say that something is not so about the nature of our human minds (the nature of our natural acts of human reasoning), then, from the known falsity of a claim that something is not so, we can truthfully claim that the opposite is, in fact, the case. The affirmation of a negative judgment as a true or known truth (as a reality) implies the affirmation or the truth of a positive judgment that refers to another state of affairs. Beginning from the affirmation of a negative judgment, a positive teaching can be always surmised and affirmed if we can prove or demonstrate to ourselves that, in a given case, with respect to the meaning and the truth of a given thesis, no intrinsic contradiction exists between that which exists, on the one hand, as a negative judgment or a negative teaching and that which exists, on the other hand, as the wording of a positive judgment or the wording of a positive teaching.<sup>38</sup>

To understand better, however, why we should be compelled to move toward this type of conclusion or, in other words, to understand the reasonableness and the inevitability of this kind of deductive shift in our thinking and understanding, we should simply note at the start that, like indemonstrable first principles, an intimate, mutual, indemonstrable relation exists between that which exists as a fundamental law of our human minds (i.e., the normativity of a cognitional law) and that which exists, on the other hand, as a fundamental law of being or reality (i.e., the normativity of a metaphysical law). Bluntly put in this and other related cases: every attempt to prove the truth of the principle of excluded middle, every attempt to prove the truth of the principle of identity, and every attempt to prove the truth of the principle of contradiction - all these attempts taken together (when in a condition of act) must always end up supposing the truth or the validity of the same laws or the same principles that they are trying to prove and claim. Whenever, normally, we engage in any kind of argument which presents itself to us as a demonstration, we must always move from that which is more certain or something which is apodictically certain to that which is to be proved and which can be shown to be true (certain and real) through a form of reasoning and inference that moves from A to B through a middle term C which allows one to go from A to B without falling into any kind of contradiction. However, on the other hand, when we work with principles which are so basic that they cannot be proved through any kind of demonstration that would work from some kind of third point of view (from an externally existing,

---

<sup>38</sup>To avoid confusion, please note that a scholastic technique which is known as “negative coherence” distinguishes between two different kinds of proof (two different kinds of demonstration): a “positive demonstration” and a “negative demonstration.” It is one thing to prove that no contradiction exists between this thesis and that thesis and another thing to prove that a given thesis is to be regarded as factually true because its truth has been demonstrated through acts of reasoning that have led to an act of reflective understanding (an act of understanding which would exist as an act of judgment). A “positive demonstration” proves the truth of a given thesis, using or alleging evidence that is available in a public way to two or more persons. A “negative demonstration” proves that, between two differing theses or two differing propositions (their respective contents), no contradiction can be detected (nothing exists in terms of an intrinsic contradiction). Belief in one does not conflict with belief in the other. “No *demonstrable* intrinsic contradiction” is to be found. Hence, if contradictions are entirely absent, in the wake of this type of absence, an order of differing but complimentary theses can be put together into an intelligible order which constructs a larger or a general point of view that is able to think together or to link a number of different variables with each other in a manner that can emerge if we should work from a suggestive point of departure which would exist for us as a species of first principle. Cf. Charles E. Curran, Robert E. Hunt, and the “Subject Professors” with John F. Hunt and Terrance R. Connelly, “Dissent In and For the Church Theologians and *Humanae Vitae*” (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969), p. 33.



independently known point of view), we will find that a necessity exists within our thinking and reasoning which, in turn, points to a reflective or a converse necessity which also exists within the order of being: that which can be known by us through our various acts of thinking and reasoning and any subsequent acts which belong to the order of our human cognition. A necessity which exists within the order of our thinking and reasoning (a necessity which can be grasped by us within the order of our human reasoning and knowing through a self-reflective form of introspective inquiry) immediately points to a similar or a like necessity which also exists within the order of real things or the order of real beings which are other than ourselves, existing in a way which is other than ourselves: indicating how or why “x” is related to “y” (how “x” comes from “y” or how “y” comes from “x”) or indicating to us the fact that “x” is related to “y” in a way that cannot be doubted. To explain a bit more fully by way of an excursus that attends to the data of our interiority:

To understand better how we can distinguish between indemonstrable principles and demonstrable principles, we best attend to personal experiences that can be engineered by us and which can be given to us through engaging in thought experiments of one kind or another. We can try, in each our own way, to construct arguments on behalf of the fundamental principles of our human reason (the laws of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle). We can try to prove their validity, their truth, and the certitude of their validity and truth and if, as we do this, we should encounter a species of closed circle which points to the form or the shape of our analysis; if, in moving toward our intended conclusions, we are continually returning to our initial points of departure, then, within this pattern, we should discover how basic or how fundamental are our laws of the mind which, through a real distinction, cannot be set apart or distinguished from that which would exist as the laws of being or the laws of reality although, if we should want to speak about the aptness of some kind of distinction (a more connatural kind of distinction), we can speak (we should speak) about an ideational, a mental, or a conceptual kind of distinction which can be alluded to because of how, through our questioning, our speculations, and our understanding, we are forming assumptions and hypotheses that, perhaps, will help us move toward the kind of understanding that, in fact, we are looking for. As we attend to how we have been talking about these differences, we should notice that we can make a conceptual or a mental distinction which distinguishes between the laws of our minds, on the one hand, and the laws of being or reality, on the other hand, although it is another thing to try and say that a real distinction should necessarily exist between the order of our human cognition (what is grasped by our acts of understanding) and the order of being which refers to the order of real being or the order of real objects that can be known by us through our self-transcending acts of human cognition. In our judgments or by our judgments, our personal subjectivities are united to objectivities which, in another way, entirely differ from the being of our subjectivities since, ontologically, objectivities exist apart from subjectivities although, cognitively, they are joined to each other in a manner which is inseparable.

As we attend thus, in our current context, to a methodology which purportedly explains why, as a first step, we can move and why we should, in fact, move from a set of negative judgments about the nature of our natural human reason toward a set of positive judgments about the nature of our natural human reason, we should immediately notice that, through our explanations and our self-understanding, we should immediately move (or, in other words, we would performatively move) from an understanding

that we have about the nature of our natural acts of human reason toward an understanding that we can have about the nature of laws that are known by our cognition, laws which exist for us as naturally existing laws. Admittedly, in both cases, our understanding would not be exhaustive. Some of our understanding is actual. Much of it is potential. But, to the degree that we understand ourselves in terms of how we think and understand and know, in the same way too we should be able to speak or to attend to other understandings which would refer to the natures or the intelligibilities of things that are other than ourselves: intelligibilities which would refer to the being of natural laws (existing as specifications of natural law). The laws which exist within our understanding (as one species of natural law) - by their open endedness or by the self-transcendent kind of orientation which belongs to them - these same laws, through their normativity, point to the being of other laws which, as specifications of intelligibility, are also to be identified with that which exists as natural law. The natural law of our cognition functions as a point of departure or as a first principle for an ordering that would subsequently move toward a knowledge that knows about the meaning and the being of natural laws (in general). Between the form of these laws and the form which exists within the achievement of our understanding, an identity is to be found. It is to be attended to and it is to be exploited.

The unrestricted intentionality or the unrestricted orientation toward being which accordingly exists within us functions as a kind of cognitive motor, serving as a species of primary cause or as a fundamental principle of order. In fact or, in other words, *unconditionally*, it organizes all of our subsequent cognitive acts. Continually, with every development in the actuation of our understanding, a re-ordering occurs with respect to the performance of our human cognition. Our cognition is always undergoing some kind of change. Continually, we are correcting ourselves (in our self-understanding and in our understanding of other things) through the genesis of our understanding as our understanding grows and expands and as it seeks to move toward new determinations of intelligible objects (new orders of intelligible objects) that are being postulated, supposed, and discovered for the first time: new orders of objects which would have to exist for us as new natural laws, having an objectivity which properly belongs to them as natural laws as we meet and encounter these new natural laws through our proportionate or our natural acts of human reasoning and understanding (nature touching nature).

A species of unrestrictedness (or a species of transcendentality) properly belongs to us in our human acts of cognition<sup>39</sup> and yet, at the same time too, this transcendentality is mated or it is joined to a

---

<sup>39</sup>Pope John Paul II, *On the Relationship between Faith and Reason Fides et Ratio* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), pp. 6-8, #4. For an introductory discussion about the transcendence of our human minds or how, in the experience of our human cognition, through our wonder and our curiosity, we find an unrestricted transcendent principle (its presence or, in other words, its operation within us within the context of our conscious life), see Robert Spitzer, *The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), pp. 94-140. In this study, various arguments and bits of evidence are employed in a manner which points to a species of transcendence which exists within us in the the life of the human spirit (a species of transcendence which is, in fact, definitive of the human spirit in terms of who we are and how we exist as human beings), a spirit of transcendence which exists as a form of self-transcendence which exists within ourselves in the manner of our human living, a principle of self-transcendence which is to be associated with an older form of conceptuality which, earlier, had spoken about, how in our human cognition, an active or agent intellect is to be distinguished as a power or an activity which exists as an originating source for our questions and

principle of limitation (a species of restrictedness or a species of conditionedness) which also properly belongs to us in the manner and nature of our human knowing (our acts of understanding being joined to our acts of human sensing) and so, through this combination of contrasting qualities, we can understand why, in some way (in a manner which elicits our wonder, interest, and inquiry), among naturally existing laws, among the various laws of nature, we find elements of transcendence and restrictedness, the two elements existing together. That which is transcendent in the extent of its intelligibility points to that which is unrestricted or transcendent in the degree or the manner of its understanding and that which is restricted or lesser in the amount or content of intelligibility which is known points to that which is limited or lesser in the extent of its possible understanding. Wherever our understanding is limited or restricted, conditions are operative in some way and, by their presence, these conditions forbid or they detract from the possible enjoyment of any kind of understanding which would exist in an unrestricted way.

With respect then to our understanding and our possibly knowing the kind of reason or cognition which is to be associated with our natural acts of human reason, in turning now to a documented account of this understanding as this would be given to us through a perusal of the history of church teaching and the series of negative judgments which, initially, we find within the deposit of the Church's official magisterial teaching (specifically: the kind of teaching which arises from extraordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium when we think about the rulings of individual popes and councils), because these negative judgments always imply or suppose the truth of contrary positive judgments of fact (these positive judgments pointing to positive teachings that are given to us through our belief in the truth of these positive judgments), it is no contradiction for us to suppose, believe, and hold that, within a context which has been already constituted by ordinary exercises of the Church's teaching authority, much has already being said, held, and believed about what exactly is the nature of our human understanding. A species of repetitive cycle is to be adverted to: specifying this cycle, as a given negative judgment emerges from a prior context which is constituted by a penumbra of positive teachings and positive judgments that have been implicitly believed by many of the Church's faithful (the Church's Magisterium not excepting), the specification or the delineation of a particular negative judgment in turn always adds to the sum or the weight of the existing prior context. It adds a nuance. In some way, immediately, the prior context is changed. A new, larger context emerges and this emergence, in turn, elicits possible fuller specifications of later church teaching about what could be the nature or the intelligibility of our natural acts of human reason or, on the other hand, what can never be regarded as a part of the nature or the intelligibility of our natural acts of human reason.

In their own way thus, with respect to these developments, as we move back and forth from the Church's ordinary teaching to the Church extraordinary teaching – all these developments about the nature of our understanding lend themselves to elicit or to solicit the need for a fuller kind of understanding that could be possibly given to us if we should move us toward some possible further understanding that attends to the nature and the status of laws which are to be regarded by us as always inherently natural: hence, existing for us as “laws of nature” or as “naturally existing laws.” To the degree then that, through time, the Church has been able to move toward a deeper understanding of who or what we are as human beings (as this understanding has shifted into forms of expression or into conceptualities which, increasingly, have grown in accuracy and in precision), in the same way too, for us, *proportionately*, an understanding of natural laws has accordingly grown and expanded. It has

---

inquiry, leading us to subsequent acts of human reasoning that are ordered or directed toward attaining a final or formal object which would exist as being in general or being in all of its parts and totality.

more fully developed. Through a kind of overflow, the growth in clarity which occurs within the depths of our self-understanding has moved outwards. It has encouraged the kind of understanding which we want and which we can have if we should refer to the ontological or the metaphysical being of natural laws and the parts or elements which are constitutive of the being of all natural laws. From a subsequent growth in clarity with respect to how our self-understanding is expressed in words and concepts, this use of words and concepts has served to create new contexts (signified by new determinations of meaning) that can then be examined and questioned as the need and the occasion arises, the asking of new questions leading to further refinements with respect to the acts and the contents of our self-understanding and then, from there, new possible refinements about how the laws of nature are to be understood and talked about.

To explain a bit more fully or a bit more concretely about how our self-understanding can be linked to a growing knowledge of natural laws where a knowledge of one leads or encourages a knowledge of the other:

In the context of the kind of self-transcendence which exists within the structure or the order of our human cognition, if, by our acts of thinking and reasoning that are directed toward our first acts of understanding (understanding what something is or understanding why something exists), we work and play with images that we imagine and construct in order possibly to find an apt image which could possibly trigger an insightful act of understanding which could reveal a previously unknown relation between two or more variables that are not seen but which now are understood, grasped by an act of understanding (a real distinction always exists between acts of sensing and acts of understanding), if we should then attend to how our acts of understanding can exist also or shift into acts of reflective understanding (acts of understanding which exist as acts of rational judgment), then, on this basis, if we can advert to the kind of reasoning or the kind of self-reflection which always exists within any of our prospective acts of judgment, by this means, we will be able to advert to how or why, from the self-understanding and the self-reflection which always exists within our limited human judgments, we can then move toward an understanding of laws which exist within sensitive or empirical nature. or nature as the world or the general object of our human experience (laws which exist as the so-called laws of nature). which would exist in their being and reality independently of whether or not we happen to understand and know them through all the acts of cognition which properly belong to us as contingent, created human beings, functioning as human subjects.

More specifically in our given human context: where, in Augustine, in the context of his conceptuality, he had noted that truth or *veritas* is something which exists within our minds and that it is known by us through a kind of “looking which occurs within ourselves,” in Aquinas, this looking is transposed in ways which refer to it as an act of judgment and a correlation which exists between truth and judgment and so, in knowing any truth through a judgment which is made of it, our judgments exist primarily through a form of self-reflection or, appositely, as an act of self-understanding even if, admittedly, we must always admit that, in any given judgment which attends either to a possible truth of fact or to the goodness of a possible concrete course of action, we must always work with acts of self-understanding which are limited by the identity or the form of a given prospective judgment and the conditions which must be met if a given

concrete judgment is to be rationally affirmed. Yet, in the face of all these limitations, even if our primary object is not *per se* an expansion or a growth in the degree of our self-understanding, in any given concrete case, through the dynamism which exists within our inquiries which lead us toward possible discoveries and the positing of rational judgments, the key or the medium is always an examination of self, an examination of our human cognition which is directed to a possible experience of self-understanding. In the context of every perspective judgment, a synthesis is first given to us within the meaning of an idea that is taken as a point of departure and then, through a discursive form of self-reflection which goes back and forth between the givens of our internal and external experience, attending to what we have done in our prior acts of sensing, questioning, imagining, thinking, and understanding (adverting to how all these acts are linked with each other and how they are ordered to each other and conditioned by each other),<sup>40</sup> eventually and hopefully we can then move toward a judgment which emerges from an awareness which experiences a species or a degree of rationality which somehow exists within ourselves as reasonable, rational human subjects. An idea, through the apprehension of a sufficiency in evidence as this apprehension is given to us in a judgment, is converted into a rationally known truth or into a rationally known fact. In other words thus, as a general principle, the greater or the better the degree of our self-understanding, the greater or the better will be our knowledge of anything which exists apart from ourselves, independently of ourselves. If, through any of our ordinary daily judgments, an externally existing world is known or revealed to us, then, through an understanding of ourselves in judgment and through true judgments about the nature of this, our understanding, we will move toward an understanding which will know about the general nature of natural laws: the kind of intelligibility which properly belongs to every kind of natural law that is accessible to our acts of thinking and reasoning and which is not to be confused with the being of any other kind of law. As our self-understanding aids us toward an understanding of natural laws, conversely too, through our understanding of natural laws, we can move toward a better understanding which we can have about the nature of the kind of understanding which we have as human beings.

In trying then to understand what the Church teaches about natural law, as a point of order (or as an ordering principle), we accordingly begin with what the Church has to say about the nature of our unaided acts of human reason (our human reason as it exists within the created order of things as opposed or as it allegedly differs from our human reason as it exists within the order of Christian redemption and the workings of God's grace). We attend to the laws of this prior, contingent human reason (the intelligibility of our acts of reasoning and knowing) and then, from there, we move to a philosophy of natural law and how we can possibly speak about the meaning and the being of natural laws. We attend initially to an implicit order of meaning and being which exists when, through inference, through our acts of inference, we can speak about what the Church says in so many words or about what the Church is apparently saying about the place and role of natural law within the context of our individual human lives. If natural law is understood by us through a distinctive kind of knowing which refers to our acts of human reasoning (our acts of human cognition), then, from the naturalness or the suitability of our acts of understanding and knowing or through the naturalness or the suitability

---

<sup>40</sup>Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 11, 912; *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2.

of our acts of understanding and knowing, we can move toward the naturalness or the suitability of that which is grasped and understood by us through our various acts of human reasoning (our various acts of human cognition). Nature in knowing touches nature in being (so to speak): the intelligibility of that which is being understood fusing with the intelligibility of that which we are experiencing within the context of our understanding as this exists internally within us as experiencing, thinking, cogitating human beings or, in other words, conversely, we do not understand what the Church has to say about naturally existing laws without first attending to what, in fact, the Church teaches about the kind of nature which belongs to us with respect to our different acts of human cognition. The laws of nature are not understood in a manner which is divorced or which is separated from the kind of knowing which belongs to us as human knowers (whether we are, in fact, religious believers or whether we are not, in fact, religious believers), the kind of knowing which we do in our acts of human cognition and as we engage in the limited kind of knowing which properly belongs to us in the kind of cognition which is endemic to us as human beings (the kind of knowing which properly belongs to us as thinking, living human subjects).

### **Natural Human Reason, the Human Mind: its Normative, Natural Existence**

Hence, as we attend to how the Church speaks about the kind of knowing which belongs to us as human subjects within the context of the Church's official magisterial teaching, we can begin with a convenient and an initial point of departure which presents itself to us as soon as we attend to a negative judgment that comes to us from a provincial council that was meeting in Constantinople in 543, rendering a decision which was allegedly soon ratified by Pope Vigilius (d. 555) when, here, he took a local determination (a local decision) and converted it into a ruling, a teaching that was to be held by all Catholics in the universal Church. With respect then to the nature or the stature of our human souls, these do not exist in any kind of natural or proper manner if they are seen to have some kind of prior, previous existence prior to an incorporated kind of existence that they would have if a soul later dwells within a body. In the wording of the ruling that was given: "if anyone says or thinks that human souls had a previous existence, viz., that first they were spirits or blessed powers which, having become tired of the contemplation of God and turned to evil, grew cold (*apopsugeisas*) in the love of God, and for this reason came to be called souls (*psuchai*) and we were in punishment sent down into bodies, *anathema sit*."<sup>41</sup> It is not correct to think or to assume that, normally or normatively, our human souls are supposed to exist in a way that is supposed to be separated or apart from the being of our bodies. It is not right to think that our souls will exist in some kind of lesser way or in some kind of lesser capacity if they should find that they are united to the materiality of our bodies in a way which would suggest that they are experiencing some kind of deprivation: a deprivation which would point to a partial privation of being (a lessening of their status or capacity). If, within this context, we cannot speak about the pre-existence of our souls relative to the physical or the material existence of our bodies, it would seem then that, in some way or other, our souls and our bodies must exist together. They should come into being at the same time and they can never properly exist apart from each other if each to enjoy the fullness of its being.

Three centuries later, in the wake of this earlier prior decision, in 869-870, an ecumenical council, the

---

<sup>41</sup>Council of Constantinople, as cited by *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, ed. Jacques Dupuis, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1996), p. 162, #401/1. For an alternative translation, see Vigilius (537) 54-555, "Canons against Origen," as cited by *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, p. 84, #203.

Fourth Council of Constantinople, ruled against an understanding of the human soul which would try to argue that, as human beings, man has two souls and not just one soul.<sup>42</sup> The wording of canon 11 emphasizes the wrongness of such a belief although, through a kind of foreword or an introductory note that is given before the negative judgment is pronounced, it is noted, in passing, that the aforementioned errant teaching is being proposed by some persons as a true teaching even though “the Old and New Testaments each teach that man has one rational and intellectual soul [*anima intellectiva*], and [that] all the Fathers and teachers of the Church teach the same opinion.”<sup>43</sup> No explanation is given about why this teaching exists about the existence of one soul or why it should be believed although, on our own reconnaissance, we can argue that, if you have one human body, then it would seem that you should have only one human soul. Body and soul go together in a unity or a positive relation that exists between them. If, in our scientific understanding of things, a given thing exists as a body or if it presents itself to us with a spatial and temporal unity which refers to one body, then it stands to reason that it should have only one nature or only one intelligibility which would allegedly explain exactly what this body happens to be and why it is not some other kind of body. One nature, one intelligibility, one form, or only one soul goes with the being of one body although, in the case which is before us, we only speak about souls if we should speak here about the existence of bodies that are alive.

For a reason that is grounded in cognitional considerations and the kind of order which exists among our human acts of cognition, we can say as a general principle that, if we want to understand anything which exists in a bodily way or, in other words, if we want to understand something that is given to us through our different acts of sense, then, through our acts of understanding, we best reduce the multiplicity which exists for us through our various acts of sense to a oneness which would exist for us through an act of understanding. Acts of understanding, as a point of departure, begin with receptions of multiplicity (an experience of multiplicity) and they reduce this multiplicity to a species of unity through an apprehension of unity which exists if we should attend to that which exists for us as the term or the content of a direct act of understanding. In an understanding, unseen but understood connections join material parts into a whole which is not seen but which is understood if we move from acts of sense to acts of understanding and if we should also understand at the same time that the intelligibility or the nature of our acts of sense differs from the intelligibility or the nature of our acts of understanding. With respect to our acts of sense and our acts of understanding, each accomplishes a

---

<sup>42</sup>Pope Hadrian II, Council of Constantinople IV, *Canons against Photius*, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 137, #338.

<sup>43</sup>*Canons against Photius*, p. 137, #338. For an illustration which functions for us as a species of evidence (it points to the unquestionableness or the sheer givenness or the acceptability of this traditional teaching which avers and holds that, as human beings, man has “one rational and intellectual soul”), please advert to how this traditional teaching is employed as a basic premiss or as a primary assumption for subsequent articulations of meaning and teaching that were given to us by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) within the context of *Gaudium et Spes* (known as the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) which was promulgated on December 7, 1965 by Pope Paul VI. As the beginning of one sentence (introducing section 29), it is simply noted at the start that “since all men possess a rational soul...” Cf. *Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, p. 144, #29. In the aforementioned premiss, the rationality of the human soul is directly tied to a teaching about how human beings have been created “in God's likeness”: “Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness.” The wording of this premiss is then joined to a second premiss in a manner which leads to an articulation of later teaching which speaks about a fundamental equality which exists among all human beings (despite any alleged differences of manner or type).

different task within the order of our human cognition. Sense encounters particularities in all their concreteness and individuality; intellect, universalities which join particularities into a pattern or a relation which is potentially repeatable. When acts of understanding succeed acts of sense, when they emerge in the wake of our prior acts of sensing, perhaps responding to questions that are being asked about the givens of sense (the so-called data of sense), they accomplish what our acts of sense are not able to accomplish through the kind of activity or the kind of reception which belongs to acts of sense and the kind of relation which exists between our acts of sense and that which could be given to sense as receptions that are given to us in our sensing acts.

Through an extraordinary act thus, the Fourth Council of Constantinople rules against a mistaken understanding about the nature of the human soul whose origins, to some extent, are to be explained if we should attend to the kind of language which, at times, we can find in various scriptural passages (references to “Spirit” mixed in with references to “Soul”) and which would, in turn, suggest that two souls can be spoken about: one, a higher life-soul and the other, a lower life-soul.<sup>44</sup> The Council does not rule against any theory or notion which would suggest that man has more than two souls or that he is informed by more than two souls (although, in the history of philosophy, learned arguments have been given to the effect that three souls can be adverted to in the context of our human life: one soul accounts for intellectual, rational activities; a second, for locomotive movements and acts of sense; and a third, for reproduction, growth and nutrition).<sup>45</sup> The Church's true teaching about the existence of only one rational, intellectual soul is not itself directly taught as the term of a positive judgment which the Fourth Council of Constantinople would in fact render although this teaching is approvingly referred to in a manner which implicitly refers to the common teaching of the Church and which thus implicitly invokes the authority of ordinary exercises of the Church's Magisterium. At this time in the history of the Church (in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century), it was not decided that the Church's teaching about the existence of one rational, intellectual soul should be confirmed or re-affirmed through an extraordinary act of the Church's Magisterium. No real need existed to the effect that this is something which should be done since this teaching was already being taught by all Catholic bishops scattered throughout world in communion with each other, Pope and bishops. A pronouncement or a conceptualization of this position through an act of the Church's papal Magisterium only emerged centuries later (in the context of other conditions and problems)<sup>46</sup> early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in 1914, when it was then said that the “rational [human] soul is united to the [human] body in such a manner that it is the only substantial form of the body” and that this “soul gives [to] man every essential degree of perfection.”<sup>47</sup>

If the existence thus of an intellectual, rational soul is to be regarded as a foregone conclusion (as a truth that cannot be called into question with much seriousness), then, on the basis of this point of

---

44Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Canon Bastible, trans. Patrick Lynch (Rochford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 97.

45Daniel J. Sullivan, *An Introduction to Philosophy The Perennial Principles of the Classical Realist Tradition* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Tan Books, 2012), p. 122.

46The context in question was the need to identify and to work with a philosophy of the mind that is both true and adequate in a way which can then assist the Church in her work of communicating the truths of the Catholic faith in a way that best effects the salvation of other human beings (a salvation which, in more traditional language, is a labor which refers to the “cure of souls”).

47Cf. <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm> (accessed October 27, 2017), citing Thesis 16, “Twenty-four Theses of the philosophy of St. Thomas,” dated July 27, 1914.



departure, we can turn toward a series of negative judgments that were pronounced by Pope Clement V (1305-1314) and the General Council of Vienne which met in the years 1311-1312 when this Council ruled against an understanding of the human mind which had tried to argue that our acts of understanding exist in a manner which is somehow divorced or separated from our acts of cognition which would refer to acts of the body and which we would identify in terms which would speak about how they exist as our different acts of human sensing. Bodily being or bodily existence is to be associated with an order of cognition which refers to our acts of human sensing. I propose this interpretation as we attend to the wording of the judgment which has come down to us from this general council. The first part cites the teaching (the point of the judgment); the second part, a censure or, in other words, a species of anathema which is to be pronounced on anyone who would dissent from the truth of the Church's teaching on the point in question. Hence, in two parts citing the judgment of this ecumenical Council:

...we reject as erroneous and contrary to the truth of the Catholic faith any doctrine or opinion which rashly asserts that the substance [the reality]<sup>48</sup> of the rational and intellectual soul is not truly and of itself (*per se*) the form of the human body, or which calls this into doubt.<sup>49</sup>

---

48As a kind of shorthand, I insert the term “reality” as a way of indicating how “substance” should be read and interpreted. An adequate understanding about what could be meant by substance cannot be provided within this limited context. Too much would have to be said. However, if descriptive language will suffice at this point, we can say about substance that it exists as a center of activity. It is both the subject of different kinds of acts or different predicates (different activities and different operations) and it is also the recipient of other acts or other predicates (different activities and different operations) which properly belong to it. A substance or thing endures through time. It remains or it abides (relatively speaking) in contrast with differing, varying acts or operations that it is the subject of or that it is the recipient of. To a thing or a substance belongs a stability (an identity) that does not belong to attributes or qualifications of one kind or another that can come and go within the life of a given substance or thing. For instance, as human beings, we exist as substances but our thinking and understanding comes and goes as it wills in the context of our individual lives. Hence, a soul as a substance or thing or a rational and intellectual soul as a substance or thing, is a subject of acts or operations that are entirely proper to it and it is also the recipient of other acts or operations that are entirely proper to it. Rational, intellectual operations are to be associated with the being of operators or subjects which exist as rational, intellectual souls. When we speak about intellectual rational operations, we speak about the subjectivity of subjects (subjects which exist as intellectual, rational subjects) and if we should choose to speak about these subjects in a manner which is divorced from the existence of intellectual, rational operations (if we should not attend to the being or the presence of intellectual, rational operations), we would speak about that which would exist only as an intellectual, rational soul. Relative to the being of intellectual, rational operations, the intellectual rational soul would exist in a condition of potency (open to the possibility of experiencing intellectual, rational acts of one kind or another).

49According to a teaching that comes to us from Peter John Olivi (1248 - 1298) on how the soul is united to a human body, “the rational soul ought not to be thought to be the *per se* and essential form of the body,” as attributed to Olivi by John P. O’Callaghan, “*Videtur quod non sit necessarium, praeter theologicam disciplinam, aliam doctrinam haberi* [It seems that it is not necessary to have another doctrine, beyond the theological discipline]: Legitimacy of Philosophy as an Autonomous Discipline and Its Service to Theology in Aquinas and Ralph McInerny,” *Theology Needs Philosophy*:

In order that the truth of the pure faith may be known to all, and the path to error barred, we define that from now on whoever presumes to assert, define, or obstinately hold that the rational and intellectual soul is not of itself and essentially the form of the human body, is to be censured as [a] heretic.<sup>50</sup>

As we notice thus, in the conciliar ruling which is being given here in this aforementioned text, nothing is being said about our acts of sensing or our acts of understanding. Nothing is said specifically about our acts of cognition. However, hypothetically, if we were to try and speak about our acts of cognition (whether our acts of sensing or our acts of understanding) and if we were to ask for an explanation about why these acts exist in the way that they do, in determining a possibility condition which would have to exist if we are to move from a given kind of act or a given kind of operation to a given kind of operator who would be the subject or the recipient of a given kind of act or a given kind of operation, a fitting explanation would have to point to something which would exist for us as a species of fundament (as both an adequate principle of activity and as an adequate principle of reception).<sup>51</sup> Both

---

*Acting against Reason is Contrary to the Nature of God*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), p. 27; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_John\\_Olivi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_John_Olivi) (accessed March 23, 2017).

<sup>50</sup>General Council of Vienna [*sic*], as cited by Dupuis, pp. 164-165, #405. For an alternative translation, see the Pope Clement V, Council of Vienne, *De Summa Trinitate et fide catholica*, as cited by *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, p. 190, #481. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (11 October 1992), #365, as quoted by Charles Morerod, *The Church and the Human Quest for Truth* (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2008), p. 99.

<sup>51</sup>To understand a bit better why, rationally, we would want to move from experiences of self in terms of our acts of inquiring and reasoning and how or why they relate to our different acts of understanding and judgment – all these acts exist as intellectual activities – to understand why we would want to move from experiencing these acts to postulations and conclusions which would speak about a species of being which would exist as some kind of intellectual rational soul, the explanation which applies here would be the principle of sufficient reason. Bluntly put, nothing exists or occurs without some kind of reason or explanation. For everything that happens, some kind of cause or reason exists (somewhere) even if, in this life, we might not be able to find any reasons that we can adequately understand and know. Hence, as we experience ourselves in certain ways and as we attempt to understand why we engage in certain kinds of activities and not in other kinds of activities, we can begin to think about the kind of being which we are, the kind of being that we happen to be. Some kind of connatural or proportionate relation must exist between the things that we characteristically do and the kind of being that we happen to be. Analytically, the predicates exist within the subject. What a subject is determines what it does or it specifies what it can properly do. And so, on the basis of this positive relation (a relation which exists as an understandable intelligible relation, a relation which exists as a real or a true relation), we can move from acts and activities to characteristics and traits that denote and point to a species of being which would exist for us as an immaterial, intellectual, rational soul. Its activities and its receptions point to the reality or the truth of this type of being. From the order of our human knowing, we move to the order of being (the order of real things). We understand more about that which exists within the order of real things although, in attending to the kind of order which also exists within the order of being, on the basis of what we have come to know about it, we should be able to move into the order of our human cognition and so move toward a greater understanding of it (its many elements or parts and how they all relate to each other in a way that is

together refer to that which we mean when, with respect to our rational intellectual activities, we must speak or we should speak about the existence of a rational and intellectual soul which belongs to us as human beings and which, to some extent, is constitutive of who we are as human beings. That which exists as an intellectual rational soul (or that which exists as an intellectual nature)<sup>52</sup> cannot be confused or, in other words, it differs from that which exists for us as a sensible, sensing soul although, in point of fact, through our experience, neither of these souls *as souls* (and neither of these natures *as natures*) can be sensed by us and so known by us through any of our different acts of sense and the kind of consciousness which exists when we refer to our different acts of human sensing. However, as we attend to our experience of self that is given to us within the data of our consciousness (as our consciousness shifts into our self-awareness or our self-consciousness), we should notice that our intellectual rational activity differs from our sensible, sensing activity although, according to the judgment of the Church's Magisterium (as this comes down to us from the language and teaching of Vienne), no real separation is to be admitted between the body and the soul (the soul existing here as an intellectual, rational soul). No real separation exists between the matter or the materiality of our human bodies and, on the other hand, a determination of this same matter or materiality which would point to the reality of an immaterial condition and the influence of this condition as it exists within us in a manner which can be described or labelled, in one way, as an intellectual rational soul but which can be labelled, in another way, as the mind or the intellect of a human being. Whether we should speak of soul or mind or intellectual nature however, as a reality, despite a difference in wording, this type of being exists as a center (or as a bearer) of attributes which refers to the emergence and the life of our intellectual, rational activities. Body and intellect differ from each other in terms of their nature or intelligibility but, in the end, they cannot be separated from each other without destroying or taking away from an essential or inherent unity which somehow exists between the two: between that which exists as the flesh and bones of a human body and that which exists as the spirit or the life of the human intellect (the spirit or the life of the human mind). In the negative and guarded teaching that comes to us from the Council of Vienne, the existence of the human mind is admitted and acknowledged. Its existence is presupposed as a basic premiss before we can then say, with Vienne, that the human body and the intellectual rational human soul do not exist in a manner which is severed from each other. The absence of independence (of body from soul or soul from body) or the absence of a separation between them points to a relation between the human body and the human mind that does not injure the being or the life of either the body or the mind. In the absence of separation, a possible good is to be alluded to, a good or a unity of things which, in fact, exists although it is a unity which we might not well understand, existing as something which elicits our inquiry and interest for the sake of a greater understanding which, perhaps, at some point, we will enjoy and possess. In a manner of statement which points to the nature of this unity and to how, in time, the teaching of Vienne has been received by the Church's Magisterium and how, currently, it is affirmed and taught by the Church's Magisterium, it is now said, as an explanation, that “the unity of soul and body is *so profound* [italics mine] that one has to consider the soul to be the “form” of the body (Council of Vienne [1312]: DS 902): i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body [which is] made of matter becomes a living,

---

constitutive of the kind of knowing which we do as cognitive human beings, as living human subjects).

<sup>52</sup>The General Council of Vienne, as cited by *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 189, #475, in its conceptuality, in a section of text which refers to the “Errors of the Beghards and the Beguines (the State of Perfection),” where within this context, it refers to that which exists as an “intellectual nature” and not that which exists as an intellectual or rational soul. In a negative judgment, it is said that everyone errs who says that “any intellectual nature in its own self is naturally blessed, and that the soul does not need the light of glory raising it to see God and to enjoy Him beatifically.”

human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures [that have been] united, but rather their union forms a single nature.”<sup>53</sup>

In the supposition or the presupposition thus which the teaching office of the Church has given to the reality or the truth of the mind's existence, on this basis then, we can conclude that, in her judgment, the Church has not had to decide in a direct, extraordinary manner that she needs to assert or to affirm the truth or the reality of the mind's existence. Citing words to this effect (as evidence) which come to us from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Pope Pius IX in a letter that was written to a diocesan bishop in 1860 notes as follows: “The opinion which places in man one principle of life namely the rational soul, from which the body also receives movement and all life, and sense, is the most common in the Church of God, and to many highly approved doctors it seems to be so intimately joined with the dogma of the Church that this is the sole legitimate, true interpretation of it, and hence not without error in faith could it be denied.”<sup>54</sup> The absence of any need for some kind of formal definition or determination accordingly points to a lack of controversy about whether or not it can be said that the human mind exists (although admittedly, in the context of our own day and time, in some philosophies, we can wonder if this lack of questioning is still with us, if the existence of the human mind has in fact now become an open question and is currently a subject of dispute).<sup>55</sup> Bluntly put (within this new context), if we should

---

<sup>53</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (11 October 1992), #365, as quoted by Charles Morerod, *The Church and the Human Quest for Truth* (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2008), p. 99. Please note that, while the reference that is given explicitly refers to a “soul” as opposed to a “rational soul,” the exclusion of a notion of soul that refers to a vegetative soul or to an animate, animal soul implies that the intended notion is the being of a rational human soul.

<sup>54</sup>Pope Pius IX, *Dolore haud mediocri*, letter to the Bishop of Wratislava (Breslau), April 30, 1860, as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 418, n. 3. Hence, as determined by a church council which later met in Cologne: “There can be no doubt that, according to the mind of the Councils, all the operations of our life are accomplished by the rational soul itself created by God.” In another way of speaking that comes to us at a later date from *Veritatis Splendor*, an encyclical letter that was issued by Pope John Paul II on August 6, 1993, it is noted with respect to the purpose or the function of the rational human soul that “the spiritual and immortal soul is the principle of unity of the human person, whereby the human being exists as a whole [...], as a person.” Cf. Dupuis, p. 179, #435.

<sup>55</sup>See <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0195126661.001.0001/acprof-9780195126662> (accessed June 6, 2015) for evidence about this kind of questioning within the English speaking world when we refer to a materialistic school of thought in philosophy which is known as “eliminative materialism” or which is often known more simply as “eliminativism.” That which cannot be quantified or put into quantified terms is either irrelevant or it is unreal (unimportant). Cf. Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm, Germany: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014), p. 16. It is said accordingly, within this context, that some mental states do not exist. However, if we should turn to some philosophies of mind which exist within the French speaking world (for example, the philosophy of Michel Foucault), we find similar trains of thought which suggest that consciousness does not exist as a basis for which we can draw any valid inferences that would be proper if we are to move toward an understanding about the supposed being of the human mind. Belief in consciousness should be regarded as something which belongs to an earlier stage in our human cultural history (a cultural epoch that has ceased to exist) and, in the same way, human rationality is best understood if it is seen to exist as another, earlier species of cultural artifact. In its day, it had meaning and purpose in the context of our lives. But, this meaningfulness has now ceased to exist and, in its wake, it has been replaced by other considerations. Hence, as we attend to

subtract or if we should deny the existence of our inner consciousness as a valid species of experience, if the existence of our consciousness is something that we should deny, can we then speak about that which would exist as the human mind? Is there anything which is really there? This question arises, or we would have to say that it would have to arise (at some point), if now our object of focus is another kind of discussion that has yet to elicit the attention of the Church if it is necessary, at some point, that the Church's Magisterium should address this issue in order to protect the faith of the Church and the life of religious believers.

However, this question aside, moving on, beginning initially with the Council of Vienne 1311-1312 and in the years that emerged after this council, in other judgments which were pronounced by the Church, we will find determinations of meaning that refer to the kind of mind which belongs to us as human beings. Teachings of one kind or another that deal with a number of different facets or aspects reflect how the Church has understood the kind of character, the kind of potency, or the kind of being which properly belongs to the being of our human reason (our human minds). A growing assembly of texts points to later developments about how the Church have moved toward an understanding of the power, the capacity, or the authority of our acts of human reasoning (our human reasoning, understanding, and knowing as it exists or as it should exist or would exist apart from any receptions of grace that could possibly come to it in a context which is determined by the salvific will of God and a divine desire to save all men or, put in other words, our human reason as referring to that which we can accomplish as contingent beings when we engage in activities or exercises which are proper to the life of our God given created human reason). Until into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the context of our official understanding as Catholics is a series of negative judgments that reflect on how the Church has understood the powers of our unaided acts of human cognition (cognition apart from grace) and then, later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Church begins to speak about our unaided acts of human cognition in a way which prefers to work with positive judgments and the kind of teaching which belongs to this type of determination.

### **Natural Human Reasons: its Powers, Acts, or Activities**

To understand what can be said thus about the capacities or the powers of the human mind (apart from the mere being of the human mind or in relation to the being of this mind), a convenient point of departure for our survey of traits and characteristics initially presents itself to us with the Council of Vienne (in France) when we attend to a negative judgment which avers to the fact that everyone errs who believes and says “that any intellectual nature in its own self is naturally blessed, and that the soul *does not need* the light of glory raising it [elevating it] to *see* God and to enjoy Him beatifically.”<sup>56</sup> Italics mine. In other words, according to the teaching or the thesis which the Church is here rejecting, some persons claim that, as human beings, without needing any special kind of help that would come to

---

these considerations, we wonder if an eliminative take on the existence of the human mind is to be explained (to some extent) by a reaction against earlier rationalist understandings which had tended to view the human mind as a kind of machine which operates in a mechanistic fashion (according to rules and procedures that rigidly determine how it functions and operates). This would not be the only variable that we could possibly allude to although, in conjunction with other considerations, it would exist as one element in a context which has emerged in a manner which has conditioned the appearance of new questions which, at one time, had been regarded as unthinkable and inconceivable.

<sup>56</sup>Council of Vienne, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 189, #475; Ott, p. 21. In Latin, as cited by Ott: *quod anima no indiget lumine gloriae ipsam elevante ad Deum videndum et eo beate fruendum.*

us from God, through the kind of cognition which normally belongs to us as human beings, we can all “see and enjoy God,”<sup>57</sup> God in an unqualified sense or, in other words, God as he is in himself. The Latin reference to *videndum* points to a seeing of God which, technically (as a species of knowing), is to be regarded as an act of cognition which resembles or which is akin to the kind of knowing which occurs whenever, literally, through our acts of visual seeing, through our corporeal bodily eyes, we behold objects which are immediately seen by us (they are given to us as sights), objects which exist as terms which belong to our different acts of human seeing. Fundamentally, within this context thus, knowing is seeing and seeing, knowing. Because thus, in our every acts of seeing, objects are immediately known by us (they are immediately perceived or given to us through the sensibility which exists in a condition of act within our various acts of seeing, whenever in the presence of light we should open our eyes), then, from this, somewhat easily we can assume or conclude that, if knowing fundamentally exists as an act of sensing, then, in our truly having a knowledge of God, in the same way or similarly, this knowledge is somehow also immediately given to us without our having to work toward a possible knowledge of God from what we know to what we have yet to know about the being of God's existence. The immediacy which belongs to one kind of knowledge in our ordinary acts of human seeing points to the immediacy of the other kind of knowledge which seems to exist also when we refer to a higher kind of knowledge which exists as knowledge of God. The intuition which immediately exists within our ordinary acts of human cognition points to an intuition which exists with respect to our human knowledge of God. In some way, as a further step, given the immediacy of our natural acts of human knowing *qua* seeing, we can conclude or believe that, essentially, the same kind of knowledge is already given to us as a prior, fundamental point of departure that would ground (for us) all else in what we do and know in the life which exists within our human cognition.

To explain then initially, in general terms, what could be meant by this kind of thinking which exists about the nature of our human cognition if we are to understand how or why, through her teaching, the Church responds in the way that she does to questions which ask about the nature of our human cognition, we can allude to the roots of earlier thinking as we can find this within a tradition of thought and reflection that comes down to us through the history of Catholic theology and how it has worked with a tradition of thought that has been taken over and incorporated from the earlier history of philosophy, forming a new general perspective for relating or organizing realities which, together, constitute a Christian understanding of the world, combining very many parts into a new unity which would exist as an intelligible, coherent whole. Citing and combining the terms of a possible explanation that we can offer which points to one trajectory of analysis and synthesis which has existed within the history of Catholic theology:

“Since patristic times, theologians have constantly been preoccupied with the problem of the rational proof of the existence of God. Two traditions, which sometimes cut across one another, may be distinguished.<sup>58</sup> One is the the proof of the existence of God, on the

---

<sup>57</sup>Ott, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>Please note at this stage in the kind of inquiry that we are undertaking and in how we should speak about it that, when we look at how the Church's Magisterium has sought to speak about the nature of our human cognition and how this cognition relates to our the knowledge of divine things, we should find in our study that, in the course of time, the teaching which has been accepted and which is promoted by the Church is hardly distinguishable; it is hardly other than a philosophy of mind that is informed by an Aristotelian understanding about that which exists as the nature of our human cognition. Hence, within this framework, we must always begin in an *a posteriori* manner with the

lines of a 'clarification of the truth', which goes back to Augustine and ultimately to Plotinus or Plato... [In this context] the Augustinian tradition is concerned with [determining] the condition of possibility of all spiritual and moral life, [in] a consciousness of truth which as life and light is [to be regarded as] the deepest *a priori* of all [our human] knowledge and will, [existing as] a primordial source welling up within the inmost core of the human spirit and prior to all man's thoughts and deeds, of which it is thus the explanation just as it is [also] the force and guide of his desire...[for] God."<sup>59</sup> Hence, according to this approach which differs from an *a posteriori* approach which would work, in the order of our human knowing, *De Spirit. C* from effects to causes, now, through the pursuit of a rigorous form of self-reflection, we should find

---

initial givens of our sense experience (the data which exists within our sense experience) and then, from there, through our inquiries and questions, gradually move toward apprehensions of meaning and truth that transcend the initial givenness of empirical determinations which exist as correlatives that properly belong to the acts which exist for us in our various acts of human sensing. By way of a line of movement that exists here, a vector moves upwards and away from that which has existed below at a lesser, inferior level. According to the kind of normativity which belongs to this understanding of human cognition and according to a conceptualization of this position as this was given and adopted by the Church's papal Magisterium on July 27, 1914 in the *Twenty-four Theses of the philosophy of St. Thomas*: "Therefore, we receive knowledge from sensible things. But since sensible things are not actually intelligible, in addition to the intellect, which formally understands, an active power must be acknowledged in the soul, which power abstracts intelligible likeness or species from sense images in the imagination." Cf. <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm> (accessed October 27, 2017), citing Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 3-4 and q. 85, a. 6-7; *Summa Contra gentiles*, 2, c. 76 and ff.; and *De Spirit. Creat.*, a. 10.

On the other hand though and oppositely, an Augustinian perspective moves downwards from above (from that which exists at a higher level toward that which exists at a lower level). In an *a priori* sort of way, we begin with a knowledge of God that, in some way, we already have (it has already been given to us) and then, from there, we gradually move toward specifications and articulations of meaning that can now be determined more fully and exactly. This later approach, as it is given to us and as we have summarized it, on the one hand is not reproached or censured by the Church although, within the context of our inquiries and research, we will find ways of speaking through various conceptualizations of one kind or another that have been censured and condemned by the Church's Magisterium (now at this time or now at some other time). These matters will be discussed more fully in due course as they are encountered within the dialectical kind of development which we will find in the articulation of the Church's true teaching. Suffice it to say however, at this point, that we should be forewarned about the kind of development that we will find in the articulation of the Church's official teaching and what decisions and choices have been made by the Church when the Magisterium has spoken about the nature of our human cognition, an understanding about the nature of our human cognition accordingly pointing to an understanding about how we exist and be as living human beings.

Parenthetically too, it is not to be forgotten that a wider or a broader understanding about the nature of our human cognition should succeed in combining the kind of truth which we can find in the immediacies of a Platonistic, Augustinian approach with an approach that is indebted to an Aristotelian understanding about how our human cognition works. While, on the one hand, strictly speaking, it is to be noted that an Aristotelian understanding of human cognition supposes a view of human cognition

that, somehow, through a primitive or a natural revelation that has existed since the beginning of things (dating from the time of our creation),<sup>60</sup> a primitive knowledge of God has always existed within us within our consciousness of self, in a knowledge that is somehow already given to us (however mysteriously it is given to us and even if it is given to us in a way which appears to be hidden and unconscious). Given this knowledge thus and its primacy and foundationalism (or, in other words, its primary agency), in it we have a first principle that governs all else in how, as human subjects, as historical agents, we think and know and how we live and act within the context of our concrete human lives. By a kind of parallel which exists between the order of being and the order of our human cognition, the *primum ontologicum* or that which is first within

---

which thinks in term of a *tabula rasa* [our understanding of things initially beginning with a “blank slate”], all our knowledge comes from experience or perception, it is to be admitted too that, in our posing of questions and in our seeking of understanding within inquiry, we never begin any inquiry without already having an understanding of something which is understood. Because certain things are already understood and known by us, we do not need to ask any questions about that which is already understood. Certain things are already known. They are unquestionable (in a certain sense) because in our quest for understanding, we always begin from something that we already understand and then, from there, we move on. The existence of this prior understanding accordingly points to an *a priori* component which exists within the order of our human cognition and, if we think about the nature of this component, we might begin to think about the possible validity of an Augustinian take about the nature of our human cognition. Properly and adequately understood, we can begin to learn about how it can exist in a way which meshes or which dovetails with an Aristotelian approach in ways which can thwart the possibility of our running into any contradictions. As we attend to the kind of tension which exists within our human lives, the kind of tension which is reflected in the performance of our human cognition, we should begin to appreciate how these two traditions or how these two ways of understanding are not without some kind of fruitful interaction with each other. If Augustine argues, in a manner which points to the validity of an Aristotelian approach, that all love is grounded in prior acts of knowledge (we tend to fear that which we do not understand and know; we move toward love on a basis which begins with acts of understanding), on the other hand too, it can be argued that love can be given to us as a kind of gift that comes to us unexpectedly from above, from sources or points of origin that we do not fathom or understand. And yet, on the basis of this love, we can begin to move toward new acts of inquiry and experiences of understanding which we had not thought possible or likely. A form of mutual causality can exist between these two kinds of cognitive experience where, on the one hand, in our judgment, it seems that the Aristotelian approach is more reasonable and rational while, on the other hand, the Augustinian approach tends to be more mysterious and unfathomable although, in its own way, it is an experience or an orientation that cannot be denied from a viewpoint which respects the data of personal human experience as some human beings speak about this experience and argue for the truth or the reality of its existence. In either case, some kind of experience exists as a common point of departure despite differences in modality. An Aristotelian philosophy of mind refers to the outward or the external data of our human acts of sense; an Augustinian philosophy of mind, to a species of data which exists internally within our awareness or consciousness of self (varying to the degree that we exist as human subjects and as we differ from person to person). For a way of speaking (a manner of articulation) which attempts to join these two philosophies of mind with each other, pointing to their essential compatibility, see Robert Spitzer SJ, *The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015).

<sup>59</sup>Eberhard Simons, “God,” *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 2, eds.



the order of being is also the *primum logicum*, that which is first within the order of our human cognition.<sup>61</sup> In the kind of wording that we can find and which comes to us from the later works of St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) in his *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* ["Journey of the Mind to God"], c. 5, 3-4: "Being is divine Being"; it "is first seen by human reason"; alternatively or, in other words, it is the "primary object" of our intellects; "and without this it can see nothing"; or alternatively, "without which it can know nothing."<sup>62</sup> Much later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the same kind of thesis is restated in writings that have come down to us from the Italian priest, Vincenzo Gioberti (d. 1852), and others of his school and way of thought (who are known as ontologists). Intuitively, our human reason first grasps a being which exists as "infinite being" and "this being...is perpetually present to the human mind, and it is only in the light of this being that existing things are known, which remain on the level of sensation as they impinge on [our] experience."<sup>63</sup> However, in 1861, in a restating of teaching that comes to us originally from the Council of Vienne, through the wording of a negative judgment that comes to us from Pope Pius IX in a decree of the Holy Office,<sup>64</sup> it is taught that "our natural knowledge of God in this world" is not to be understood in a way which should be conceived in terms which would speak about the necessity (or the givenness) of any kind of immediacy.<sup>65</sup> We necessarily err if we should try to claim that an "immediate knowledge of God, habitual at least, is essential to the human intellect, so much so that without it, the intellect can know nothing, since indeed it is itself intellectual light."<sup>66</sup>

---

Karl Rahner, *et al* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 391-392.

60See Fergus Kerr, "Knowing God by reason alone: what Vatican I never said," *New Blackfriars* (2010): 220-221 on how he speaks about traditionalism as a school of thought within the life of Catholic theology, the school of "traditionalism" existing most strongly in France and Belgium in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in its protest against 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment views on the sufficiency of our human reason. It is alleged that, alone, through the agency of our human reason, we can come to an adequate knowledge of moral and metaphysical truths in a manner which has not to rely on the kind of *a priori* which exists if we refer to the constitutive role of human community and the voice of tradition which informs the meaning and the life of our different human communities.

61Albert Keller, "Ontologism," *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 4, p. 290.

62[http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library\\_article/666/Journey\\_of\\_the\\_Mind\\_into\\_God\\_St\\_Bonaventure.html](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/666/Journey_of_the_Mind_into_God_St_Bonaventure.html) (accessed November 3, 2015); Keller, p. 291.

63Keller, p. 290. According to one summary that has been given of ontologism as a school of thought and philosophy that comes to us from the writings and teaching of Vincenzo Gioberti [cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincenzo\\_Gioberti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincenzo_Gioberti) (accessed November 28, 2015)]:

"Ens" creates *ex nihilo* the existent. God is the only being (Ens); all other things are merely existences. God is the origin of all human knowledge (called idea, thought), which is one and so to say identical with God himself. It is directly beheld (intuited) by reason, but in order to be of use it has to be reflected on, and this by means of language. A knowledge of being and existences (concrete, not abstract) and their mutual relations, is necessary as the beginning of philosophy.

64Pope Pius IX, "Errors of the Ontologists," as cited by *Sources*, p. 419, #1659.

65Ott, p. 18.

66"Errors of the Ontologists," September 18, 1861. See *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 419-

Immediacy *per se* should not be regarded as a sign or mark of authenticity in the experience which we have of ourselves when we are engaged in our various acts of human cognition where, within this context, we would be assuming that, without an experience of immediacy, we cannot refer to realizations of cognition which would exist for us as inquiring, thinking, knowing human subjects. In other words, in a manner which more closely refers to the wording of Pope Pius's negative judgment, according to the Church's teaching, an immediate knowledge of God is not essential to the being and the development of our human understanding and knowledge as a species of cause and effect (a higher cause and a lower effect).<sup>67</sup> Being, as understood and known, is not to be identified with that which exists as divine being or that which is to be conceived by us as divine being. Universals which we can understand and know as terms that belong to our acts of understanding are not to be identified with the being of who God is. From any alleged knowledge and understanding of God, we cannot assume that, implicitly, as a necessary consequence, all other beings will be known (existing for us as lesser derivatives). The ideas of things that we can possibly understand and know are not to be seen as modifications of some kind of supreme idea which could refer to who or how God exists within the context of our understanding and knowledge. Created things do not exist, in some way, as parts of God. How God creates things which are other than himself is not to be identified with how God understands Himself, God's understanding of himself differing from how God understands things which could be other than himself.

In term of immediacy thus as this should refer to our having a possible knowledge of God, in this context, we must thus speak about a knowledge of God which does not emerge in any kind of slow, incremental way (as a discursive form of human knowing) where, through time and amid circumstances, through acts of inference, we would gradually move from whatever is first known by us in our knowing and understanding toward that which could be known by us eventually as a consequence of our subsequent inquiry and reflection and by means of an order which manifests itself to us within the movement of our inquiry and reflection (God emerging as a conclusion who is rationally known by us in terms of his being and existence as the term of a reflective act of understanding, an act of understanding which would exist as the positing of a rational judgment), judgments, as acts of understanding, having to be always reasonable or rational if they exist as acts of understanding and not as acts that we will into being or existence. The contrary emphasis that is given to an alleged primacy of immediacy suggests, instead, that, if we should speak about inferences or the existence of cognitive consequences, we should accordingly speak about another, distinct kind of inference: one which does not move from a knowledge of A to a knowledge of B; inferences which would exist instead as immediate inferences or as *a simultaneo* inferences.<sup>68</sup> In this type of situation, in

---

420, #1659-#1665.

<sup>67</sup>Keller, p. 290. I take Keller's summary as a point of departure for introducing other ways of speaking which can, perhaps, reveal unsuspected nuances of meaning which could, in turn, point to a greater meaningfulness that is to be found within the exposition and the affirmation of the Church's teaching as this has come down to us initially from the Council of Vienne and as it has been augmented by subsequent expositions of the Church's position through subsequent declarations of the Church's official teaching.

<sup>68</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, eds. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, rev. Frederick E. Crowe with the collaboration of Elizabeth A.

apprehending, for example, the concept of a thing or the definition of a given thing, its truth or reality would be something which is directly and immediately revealed to us within the consciousness of our cognitive apprehension. The truth or reality manifests itself to us simply or merely through our knowing or grasping the meaning of a given concept. Something is true or something is real by definition (as soon as a meaning is grasped by an act of understanding that grasps it and as soon as this meaning is put into words which we could possibly repeat to ourselves or to others). Citing a commonly given example: “A finite whole is greater than any of its parts.”<sup>69</sup> We cannot understand the meaning of “part,” or the meaning of “whole,” or the meaning of “greater than” unless we refer to the meaning of the other two, complementary terms. The correct understanding or the truth of a “part” presupposes our correctly understanding the truth of a “whole” and also our correctly understanding the truth of a “greater than” which knows about how a whole is to be compared when it is related to a part. The same holds for understanding “whole” and also for understanding “greater than.” An understanding of any given dimension immediately reveals how everything stands together in all its wholeness and persuasiveness. A kind of intellectual or mental compulsion immediately emerges thus within ourselves (within our consciousness of self) and, in a manner which points to how rational determinations exists as specifications or determinations of human freedom (the freedom of a given act is determined by its rationality), we would be moved to an assent of mind or intellect which would obviously differ from anything which would exist as an act of willing or consent that is given to our different acts of human willing and deciding (in that which we should do or how we should respond on the basis perhaps of what we happen to know about a given situation).

In referring thus to a species of immediate knowledge as this refers to God, through an inference that we can make that moves us to a conclusion, if this knowledge of God does not exist as a species of sensible intuition (proceeding for us immediately from an act of human sensing), then, as another species of intuition, it can only be regarded as an immaterial or a spiritual kind of intuition or, in other words, as an intellectual kind of intuition. Its immediacy is such that it alludes to a knowledge of God which should somehow already exist for us as a simple given or in a manner which is spontaneous (without the benefit or the need for any kind of pre-conditioning form of rational inquiry and argument that could move us from that which we already initially know toward that which we could come to know about at a later date and time) although, subsequently, with respect to an immediate knowledge of God that we allegedly already have, through our thinking and inquiry about that which could be contained in this prior immediate knowledge of God, we could then begin to put this prior knowledge into useful, communicable terms that could be of help to us as we relish or delve more fully into the kind of knowledge which we already allegedly have. Words, concepts, definitions, and propositions allow us both to speak to others and also to speak to ourselves if we should want to attend to the content of our knowledge in a way which could possibly lead to the posing of questions that had not been imagined or perhaps thought possible at an earlier date and so, from this, the emergence of a new possible knowledge of God which would move us from (1) an undifferentiated kind of apprehension that is somehow already given to us in a primary type of intuition toward (2) a differentiated kind of apprehension where apprehensions of meaning are informed by nuances and shades of meaning that highlight or point to unsuspected distinctions of one kind or another which, in turn, would point to a sophisticated kind of knowledge that we can now have about the being of God and how God exists in

---

Morelli, Mark D. Morelli, Robert M. Doran, and Thomas V. Daly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 157

<sup>69</sup>Mortimer J. Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody Difficult Thought Made Easy* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 155.

the way that he happens to be and exist.

In thus rejecting the sufficiency or the omnipotence of our natural acts of human reasoning (as the Church has adjudged and declared: God cannot be fully or adequately known by us through the kind of knowing which typically belongs to us as human beings), when, at the same time or implicitly, the Church also rejects an understanding of human cognition which would think of it in terms of sense and intuition (as noted, the immediacy of sense suggesting or pointing to the immediacy of intuition), the result is a set or a pair of two premisses that have been associated or related to each other and which have led to subsequent elaborations of official Church teaching which have pointed to the limitations or the restrictions of our human reason and also to the inadequacy or the wrongness of an understanding of human cognition that would want to think of it in terms which belong to the kind of immediate knowing which belongs to our different acts of human sensing, our acts of seeing (as one species of sensible intuition) functioning as a basic paradigm or as a species of first principle for how everything else should be understood and known within the conduct of our cognition and in the kind of self-knowledge which, allegedly, we have when we inquire and ask about the nature of our human cognition.

As a kind of summary which looks into the future from the date and time of the Council of Vienne in the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century, on the limitedness of our human reason (our acts of human inquiry leading into possible, later acts of human reasoning), a scholarly examination of later magisterial statements in the course of the Church's history reveals forms and manners of restatement that can be traced to have emerged (to have descended) from the earlier teaching of the Council of Vienne. Our focus shifts to how same or similar apprehensions of meaning which have been conceptualized in different ways in a manner which points both to changes of context and developments within the order of conceptualization that have emerged beyond or outside the corporate life of the Church.

To cite some of these later forms of statement that come to us much later in the history of the Church (from approximately the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century), in *Maxima quidem*, a papal allocution of Pope Pius IX that was given in Italian on June 9, 1862 argues and notes that we err if we should believe that “human reason, with absolutely no regard to God, is the only judge of the true and the false, the good and the evil; it is a law unto itself [autonomous] and is, by its own natural powers, sufficient to provide for the good of individuals and of peoples.”<sup>70</sup> An earlier encyclical letter of Pope Pius IX dated November 9, 1846, *Qui pluribus*, had noted that we err if we should hold that our “religion” exists as if it “were not the work of God but of men” or as if it “were some

---

<sup>70</sup>Please note that I cite the wording of the Pope's teaching not from any text that we find in *Maxima quidem* but from the text of the later *Syllabus of Errors* which was issued in 1864 and which renders the wording of this teaching in a way which is much more condensed than what we find if we should refer to the text of *Maxima quidem*. Cf. <https://thejosias.com/2015/06/10/maxima-quidem/> (accessed October 2, 2017). The same teaching on the limitations of human reason is reiterated by Pope Pius IX in his allocution of December 9, 1854, *Singulari quadam*, which censures the notion that “human reason” is to be regarded “as a sure teacher” and that, from it, we can “expect to attain salvation in all things under its guidance” despite the “deep and painful wounds” [that] were inflicted on human nature by the guilt of our first father,” a “darkness” that has “spread over our understanding...the light of reason has now become dulled.” Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, p. 25.

philosophical discovery which can be perfected by human means.” “Our most holy religion has not been invented by human reason.”<sup>71</sup> Later developments in the history of human thought (subsequent to the Council of Vienne) accordingly explain why, later, newer terms and a larger number of concepts were used to express more fully the negative teaching of the Council of Vienne on the lack of omnipotence which should be ascribed to the operations and the powers of our human reason (the human mind): what, in fact, it is able to do if the form or structure of this reasoning is distinguished and isolated from the influence of every other kind of variable which can exist.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly too, later texts that come to us from the Church's Magisterium reiterate the teaching of Vienne which specifically refers to the fact that we should not speak, allegedly, about a natural, or an immediate, or an intuitive knowledge of God which is somehow always given to us within the order of our human cognition (properly belonging to our ordinary acts of human cognition according to the mode and manner of their proper existence).

In a judgment, for instance, that comes to us from 1887 and the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII, it is said that we err if we should hold that “in the order of created things, there is immediately manifested to the human intellect something divine in itself, such that it belongs to the divine nature.”<sup>73</sup> A comparison of the wording found in the “Errors of the Ontologists,” taken from a decree of the Sacred Office, dated September 18, 1861, with the the wording found in the “Errors of Antonius de Rosmini-Serbati,” taken from a decree of the Holy Office, dated December 14, 1887, should point to an overlapping listing of negative judgments which, together, rule against a point of view which would want to talk about a natural or a proportionate kind of human knowing which includes, or which supposes, or which would work from an immediate knowledge of God which is somehow already given to us as human subjects, existing as a species of *a priori* that is seen as proper to the being of our human cognition and so, as a consequence, not existing as a special gift or favor that has been given to a particular concrete person but which is not necessarily given all human beings. God being God, in the kind of competence or power which belongs to God, nothing prevents God from giving to a particular individual person (within the context of life within this world) something which would exist as an “immediate vision of God.”<sup>74</sup> The potency for our receiving

---

<sup>71</sup>*Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 411, #1636. In different words but repeating the same teaching, in 1864 the *Syllabus of Errors* lists and cites a proscribed thesis which is conceptualized in the proposition which says that “divine revelation is imperfect, and therefore subject to continuous and indefinite progress, which corresponds to the progress of human reason.” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 436, #1705. The same *Syllabus* also rejects any teaching which says that “all truths of religion flow from the natural power of human reason; hence, reason is the chief norm by which a man can and should come to a knowledge of all truths of whatever kind.” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 435, #1704. When the *Syllabus* refers to these two errant teachings that it cites and rejects, the negative teaching that is found in *Qui pluribus* is referred to as their common source.

<sup>72</sup>See Pope Pius IX, “Syllabus” or Collection of Modern Errors, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 435-436, #1703, #1704, #1705; Dupuis, p. 41, #112/4.

<sup>73</sup>Pope Leo XIII, “Errors of A. Rosmini-Serbati condemned by the Holy Office,” December 14, 1887, as cited by Dupuis, p. 51, #141. See also *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 475, #1891.

<sup>74</sup>Ott, p. 22.

this kind of knowledge always already exists for us as human beings, prior to any kind of death that would separate a person's soul from union with his or her physical, organic body.

On the inadequacy or the wrongness of an understanding of human cognition that would want to think of it in terms of immediacy and intuition, when, in 1887, Pope Leo XIII ruled against a number of teachings which would say that “in the order of created things there is *immediately* manifested to the human intellect something divine in itself, such that it belongs to the divine nature [my italics],”<sup>75</sup> for the first time apparently, in the articulation of the Church's magisterial teaching, a direct reference is made to the conceptuality of intuition when, in the wording of a consequent negative judgment, the unacceptability of immediate knowledge as intuition is explicitly referred to. Hence, it is wrong for us to say that: “the being (*esse*) that we *intuit* must necessarily be something of the necessary and the eternal Being (*entis*), of the cause that creates, determines, and perfects all contingent beings; and that is God [my italics for intuit].”<sup>76</sup> Italics mine. The larger context here is a listing of 40 philosophical errors that are attributed to a school of philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which is known as Ontologism and which allegedly holds that “God and divine ideas are the first object of our intelligence and the intuition of God [is] the first act of our intellectual knowledge.”<sup>77</sup> Always thus, in responding to new conceptualizations of meaning that communicate the point or the content of a mistaken thesis or the point or the content of an errant belief in new ways, when the Church's Magisterium responds in language which employs or which reflects the use of this new terminology, conditions are created which could lead us toward a more nuanced understanding about the nature of our human cognition (the human mind as it can be considered apart from the influence, the interference, or the possible working of every other variable). The difference in language can possibly point to differences and distinctions which could exist at other levels, developments in conceptualization possibly pointing to contradictions which had not been known or suspected.

### **On the Impossibility or the Possibility of Inference**

From an initial negative judgment which has thus referred to the limitedness of our human acts of reasoning as these acts exist in and among themselves, a secondary or subsidiary point of departure can be also found when, on the basis of this limitedness, we can attend to where limits are, in fact, absent in the existence or in the proper functioning which belongs to our acts of human reasoning: that which it can legitimately do; hence, the kind of authority which properly belongs to it. Our context is a listing of philosophical errors that were drawn up sometime in 1346 or 1347 in order to censure a number of theses and propositions that were allegedly taken from the writings and lectures of a French medieval philosopher who is known to us as Nicholas of Autrecourt or, alternatively, as Nicholas of Ultracuria

---

<sup>75</sup>Pope Leo XIII, “Errors of A. Rosmini-Serbati Condemned by the Holy Office,” as cited by Dupuis, p. 51, #141.

<sup>76</sup>Leo XIII, “Errors of A. Rosmini-Serbati,” as cited by Dupuis, p. 51, #142. Citing the text of the original Latin: *Esse, quod homo intuetur, necesse est, ut sit aliquid entis necessarii et aeterni, causae creantis, determinantis ac finientis omnium entium contingentium: atque hoc est Deus*, as cited by Henricus Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum* (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder & Co., MCMXXXVII), p. 528, #1895.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontologism> (accessed June 3, 2015); Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 21; Ott, p. 18.

(c. 1299-1369),<sup>78</sup> allegedly a follower of William of Ockham and an adherent of the philosophy of mind which is to be associated with the thought of William of Ockham although, apparently, on a number of points, it cannot be said that Autrecourt is to be regarded as entirely an Ockhamist.<sup>79</sup> Eighteen errors were listed or, more accurately, less misleadingly, we would say that eighteen propositions were listed and judged in and about 1346 to be “erroneous, false, doubtful, presumptuous, and suspected.”<sup>80</sup> A survey of the condemned propositions (as we examine these propositions) points to a range of opinions and teachings which vary from that which appears to be simply false and so untrue to that which appears to be only suspicious and hence, in varying degrees, questionable and so, for us, lacking in credibility. As given to us, as we have these propositions and as we read their text, the possible meaning of a given proposition can, at times, be disputed. Not all meanings are too obvious in their significance. One interpretation can suggest the likely presence of a false thesis; another, a lack of clarity about what a given thesis seems to be saying or meaning. In moving thus through the list of these condemnations, we can try to move toward an understanding of the judgment or the “mind of the Church” which, in its own way, is pointing to the nature or the structure of the human mind as this mind was understood in a context which refers to the kind of day to day teaching which is distinctive of the informal, ordinary teaching of the Church's Magisterium as this has been exercised by Pope and bishops, in communion with each other and working with each other in order to advance the cause of God's kingdom.

Hence, in moving on, as we try to work from the listing of these censured propositions toward this common judgment, mind, or understanding of the Church as this refers to the powers of our human reason (as this is simply given to us in our created human contingency), we can begin (according to the proffered list) with an initial proposition (that is taken from Autrecourt) which casts aspersions on the understanding of the human mind as this can be known by us from the teaching of Aristotle (from the philosophy of cognition which is to be associated with Aristotle's thought and reputation and which would seem, on inspection, to come to us from various texts that are contained within the Aristotelian corpus). Bluntly put, according to Autrecourt, there are certain things that the human mind is not able to perform and do (despite what it might want to do, or despite what it thinks that it is doing in its proper functions and operations). If our minds should know about the existence of something that it happens to know, we cannot infer from this known thing that something else would accordingly exist, that something else would be accordingly known by us in a shift which would move us from A to B (from a knowledge of A toward a knowledge of B that would now exist for us if we try from that which

---

78Pope Clement VI, “Errors (philosophical) of Nicholas of Autrecourt,” cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 202-203, #553-570; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas\\_of\\_Autrecourt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_of_Autrecourt) (accessed May 19, 2015). I say “allegedly” for cautionary reasons since, in the history of doctrinal conflict and controversy, we can find instances when it is claimed (by some critics and opponents) that some texts have been improperly quoted from their original sources (the transcriptions are not accurate) and that, in some cases too, some texts that are quoted cannot be found in the original sources from which they were supposedly taken.

79C. J. F. Martin, *An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 131-132; F. C. Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), pp. 262-266; Mauricio Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jorge J. E. Garcia; Timothy B. Noone (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 458-465; Julius Rudolf Weinberg, *Nicholas of Autrecourt: A Study in 14<sup>th</sup> Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 6.

80“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 202, n. 1.

we already know to that which we can begin to know).<sup>81</sup>

Employing and reiterating the kind of conceptuality which comes to us from the original wording of the censured proposition in question,<sup>82</sup> even with evidence or despite the presence of any evidence that we could have in a given case, we cannot move, by means of an inference or a conclusion, “from one matter” to a second “matter.” Similarly, as strange as it may seem, if our minds should know about the non-existence of a certain thing, then, we cannot infer or conclude that this something else does not in fact exist. If we say that God is and then if we say that God is not, we cannot infer or conclude that we are truthfully talking about the same thing. In attending to any evidence that we can have for possibly affirming the truth of any given proposition, through our understanding, we cannot determine where

---

81For a reiteration of this kind of teaching as it refers to the irrationality of inference that is being alleged in the philosophy of mind which comes to us from Nicholas of Autrecourt, please attend to the same kind of teaching (which is rejected) as, in another context, it is presented to us centuries later in *Pascendi dominici gregis*, a papal encyclical that was issued by Pope St. Pius X on September 8, 1907. Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 514, #2072; *On the Doctrines of the Modernists and Syllabus Concerning the Errors of the Modernists* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, n.d.), pp. 10-11; pp. 49-51. Although employing a different way of speaking (a different type of conceptuality which conjointly points to both the wording and the thought of a school of philosophy that this encyclical was censuring in the context of its own day and time as “false doctrine”), it is noted within this newer, later context that when our “human reason is entirely restricted [or confined] to *phenomena*, namely, things that appear, and that appearance by which they appear” or, in the other words, when our human reason is restricted to “experience” or apprehensions of “purely *subjective* truth,” the result is a truncated understanding of our human cognition which is to be identified with a species of philosophic “agnosticism” or, in other words, with a philosophy of mind which is to be conceived in terms which speak about a “pure nescience” (a knowledge which, in fact, is itself a lacking in knowledge or a knowledge which is to be associated with ignorance, the givenness or the facticity of our ignorance). If we should refer (somewhat loosely at this point) to a Kantian understanding of human cognition – admittedly, *Pascendi* does not explicitly refer to the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant even if its language and turns of phrase point to a species of Kantian conceptuality: a real distinction which allegedly exists between that which exists as phenomena and that which exists as the truth or the reality of things) - to “sense,” “experience,” or to “intuition” there belongs a primacy which denies or which takes away from the primacy which normally belongs to our human acts of the mind (or our human acts of reason) when, through the kind of penetration which belongs to the entry and onset of understanding (occurring through the inner experience of our understanding), we can move towards apprehensions of being and reality that can never be given to us through the givens of “sense,” “experience,” or “intuition” but which can only be suggested (as a possible point of departure) if we should attend to the kind of given which exists for us in the immediacy of “sense” or in the immediacy of “experience” and the form or structure which is given to us initially through our apprehensions of sense and experience. A technical designation for this point of view or theory about the nature of our human cognition refers to the “ism” of “perceptualism.” Validity in human cognition, in human knowledge, is measured by that which would exist as a valid perception where, perceptually or empirically, a presence of something that is outer or external is given to one through our acts of human sensing. In some way, it is said that what is given “lies before one.” Cf. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J., *Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S. J. (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 193; Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 263.



degrees of certainty exist or what are, in fact, the degrees of certainty which should exist in a given case.

If we should attend to the powers of our soul (our immaterial souls as distinct from our material bodies), we cannot determine any specifications or presentations of evidence that could point to the existence of objects that would exist in a material manner (beyond or outside the ambit or the experience that we have of ourselves in terms of our human souls).<sup>83</sup> A species of absolute disjunction (a real distinction) exists between that which exists as soul (or the being of immateriality) and that which exists as matter (or the being of materiality).<sup>84</sup> Through that which exists as the spirituality of our souls, we cannot know anything which would refer to the materiality of our bodies although, on the

---

Hence, if we should fall into this mistaken perceptualist, empiricist understanding about the nature of human cognition, if we should appropriate and believe in this way of thinking and believing, inevitably as a result, we would have to claim that, as human beings, through the kind of knowing which is supposedly proper to us as human beings, we cannot, in fact, transcend or move beyond anything that is simply given to us as phenomena: whether the phenomena as this exists within the data of our sensible experience, or the phenomena which exists as the data of our sensible experience, or a species of phenomena which could be a kind of inner experience which belongs to us as human subjects if we should notice or attend to inner movements which are said to exist within us as emotions or intuitions of the heart in a species of apprehension which we should regard as a new species of first principle for all else which can possibly occur for us within the conduct and the experience of our thinking and understanding. Cf. *On the Doctrines of the Modernists*, p. 11; p. 17; p. 19; p. 49. In other words, bluntly put, according to this errant way of thinking, our “human reason...has neither the right nor the power to transgress [to overstep] the limits of the same [that which exists as phenomena or that which exists as experience which points to that which exists as phenomena].” Cf. *On the Doctrines of the Modernists*, p. 10. Its operations (the operations of our reason) do not differ from the kind of operation which exists within our various human acts of sensing and experiencing if the function of our reason is indeed described in ways which speak about how it, allegedly, forms “mental pictures” and how it functions in a way which resembles the kind of work that is done by painters who want to restore a work of art in a way which more fully reveals shades and shapes of color that exist within a painting, constituting its visible, sensible form. Cf. *On the Doctrines of the Modernists*, p. 15.

Hence, and somewhat obviously, with respect to God and the being of divine things: our reason “cannot raise itself to God nor recognize His existence, even through things that are seen.” We cannot move from that which is already known (that which is immediately known by us in our experience) to that which could be possibly known (to that which could be newly known and affirmed by us through our acts of our minds in a way which would unite us as knowers with the reality or the truth of something which is now being known by us (perhaps, now, for the first time). By a kind of over attachment which exists with respect to the data of our external and internal experience (an attachment which points to a self-enclosed notion of the human subject and a lack of advertence to the self-transcendence which properly belongs and which exists with respect to our human subjectivity), it is not possible for us that we can then move from the realm and the order of our individual subjectivity toward that which would exist as the order of real objects which would be other than our subjectivity, an order of real objects which is constitutive of objectivity as an order of meaning and being which always exists apart from the subjectivity of any being that could know about the existence of anything which would exist in an objective way.

<sup>82</sup>“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 202, #554: “from the above

other hand, the reference to certainty in evidence as this refers to the being of our spiritual souls suggests or it implies the possibility of our possibly having a secure and certain knowledge which would know about the being or the reality of our individual, personal existence (given the kind of experience which is given to us within the awareness or the consciousness that we have of ourselves, experiencing and enjoying our individual human existence).<sup>85</sup> “We have neither certitude nor evidence of any material substance, only the certitude of our own soul,”<sup>86</sup> the existence of our souls.

According to the Polish philosopher, Leszek Kotakowski, in his analysis of the origins of skepticism in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, it can be said about Nicholas of Autrecourt that, to all intents and purposes, he argued to the effect that, in conjunction with the principle of non-contradiction, the only other certain knowledge of things that we can have, as human beings, is a sure knowledge about “the certainty of our own existence,” our individual, personal existence (since, allegedly, this claim can be found and substantiated in a statement that comes to us from Autrecourt as it is allegedly taken from the corpus of his teaching: as cited thus according to the Latin rendering, *quod de substantia materiali alia ab anima nostra non habemus certitudinem evidentiae* [literally: “that we do not have from our soul the certainty of evidence concerning another material substance” or, more simply, “we do not have from our soul the certainty of evidence concerning another material substance”]).<sup>87</sup> If Nicholas argues that, from our souls, from our inner selves, we do not have any certain evidence which would point to the being and the existence of an exterior material thing (something else which is other than ourselves in the being of our souls), it would seem that, by a kind of omission or as a species of open question, from our souls, from our inner selves, it can be said that we can have certain evidence to the effect that, at least, we can know that we ourselves individually exist. We do not know and we cannot know about the being of

---

mentioned evidence from one matter another cannot be inferred or concluded.”

83“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #557: “we do not have from our soul the certainty of evidence concerning another material substance.”

84To understand the meaning of soul within this context, think about the kind of experience which is given to us and which we have when we refer to our consciousness of self and when we think about the experience which is given to us through our consciousness or our awareness of self. If soul differs from body, if these refer to two distinct principles, then, through our consciousness of self or through our inner experience of self, it would seem that we cannot become aware of anything that is lacking in consciousness, whether we would speak about a material order of things that would exist about us in some kind of external outer way or whether we would speak about an absence of consciousness within ourselves. An exclusive disjunction exists between consciousness and unconsciousness although, in the context of the kind of skepticism that we find in the philosophy of Autrecourt, we cannot move from any given datum to any kind of inference or conclusion that we would draw if the other thing to which we conclude is not itself a datum that is given to us in a manner which is self-evident.

85Leszek Kotakowski, *Metaphysical Horror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 21; Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 462.

86Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 463, citing J. Denifle and J. Chatelain, eds, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 2, Paris: repr. 1964 (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1891), p. 577.

87“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #557.

other things and so the certain evidence that we would seem to have within ourselves points only to ourselves, to the real being of ourselves, in how we happen to be and exist as human beings.

Along the same lines of thinking and thought, in the adjacent philosophy or in the connatural philosophy of John of Mirecourt (fl. 1345), it is also said there that, in the context of our human knowing and in the immanentism or in the solipsism of our human knowing, we can only know about two things with any degree of certainty: (1) the principle of non-contradiction (whose certainty, for Autrecourt, was all too evident if we should each refer to the kind of experience that is given to us in our consciousness of self) and (2) something which exists as an “immediate intuition” which knows about of the being of our individual, personal existence.<sup>88</sup>

Within the order of things that accordingly refers to our acts of understanding (apart from any of our acts of religious belief), according to Autrecourt, the only certainty that, explicitly, we can allude to is “the certainty of the first principle, or that which can be resolved into the [following] first principle,”<sup>89</sup> this first principle being “if something is, it is something”<sup>90</sup> (hence, cryptically: if A is, it is A; or given A, it is A). This first principle, which exists internally within our minds as a constitutive law or principle, is referred to, by some sources, as the principle of identity although, on the other hand, other external sources refer to it as, in fact, the principle of contradiction<sup>91</sup> or, through a third and apposite way of speaking, as the principle of non-contradiction.<sup>92</sup> According to a principle which points to an interpretation of Aristotle on the kind of primacy which allegedly belongs to the principle of non-contradiction:<sup>93</sup> “all the certitude we possess is resolved into this principle, and the principle itself is not resolved into anything else as a conclusion is resolved into its premise.”<sup>94</sup> Hence, if the principle of identity or the principle of contradiction is known by us in an internal way without need for any our acts of sense, these principles existing as “truths of reason,” the kind of knowledge which is given to us through our various acts of human sensing is not able to secure itself from all possibility of question and doubt. It is not able to vouch for itself in terms of the reality of its being or the reality of its truth or object (as apprehended) since the appearance of any given thing as this is apparently given to us through our various acts of human sensing is not to be associated or identified with the being or the

---

88Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_of\\_Mirecourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Mirecourt) (accessed January 1, 2017).

89“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #558; Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 461.

90“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #570.

91Julius R. Weinberg, “Nicolas of Autrecourt,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, v. 5, 1972 ed., p. 500.

92Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 263; Kotakowski, *Metaphysical Horror*, p. 21; Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 460.

93Weinberg, *Nicholas of Autrecourt*, p 13.

94Nicholas of Autrecourt, “Letter to Bernard of Arezzo,” as quoted by Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 460, citing and translating from the text of “Briefe zu B. von Arezzo,” J. Lappe, ed., “Nicholas von Autrecourt. Sein Leben, seine Philosophie, seine Schriften,” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 1908 6/2, Münster: Aschendorff; also citing J. Weinberg, *Nicholaus of Autrecourt: A Study in Fourteenth-century Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princetown University Press, 1948), p. 14.

apprehension of its reality.<sup>95</sup> The givenness of our empirical knowledge best resembles the kind of givenness which can belong to the kind of apprehension which exists in religious belief.<sup>96</sup> With respect then to the insecurity of our empirical knowledge (why we can speak about it): if, for instance, God's omnipotence is taken as a possible point of departure, then nothing prevents a divine creation of phantoms or appearances that can be given to us in our experience but which are not to be identified with the being of real things.<sup>97</sup> In principle, deceptive perceptions and veridical perceptions cannot be distinguished from each other in terms of all the perceptions that we could be enjoying as human beings.<sup>98</sup> Hence, in the business of our human knowing or within the order of our human cognition, acts of sensing should not be regarded or employed as fundamental, apodictic points of departure. As Autrecourt expresses this point of view in the manner that he employs: "it is possible, without contradiction, that something seems to you to be so without being so; therefore, you cannot have evident certitude of its being so."<sup>99</sup> While the principles of identity and contradiction exist invariably among human beings as we go from the mind or the understanding of one human being to the mind or understanding of another (these principles cannot be negated without risk of contradiction), the givens of sense – cited as sensible appearances (*apparentia naturalia*) or as phenomena<sup>100</sup> - these givens always vary and shift as we go among human beings and as we move from the sensing of one human being to that of another even as each person is responding or attending to the reception or the sensing of the same sensed object (a sound, for instance, which is heard or an object which is seen). Knowable reality is not reducible to anything which allegedly exists as sense data, as appearances, or as phenomena.

To preclude the possibility of any misunderstanding as this impinges on how we are to understand the principles of identity and contradiction and how they relate to each other, as a possible solution for us in the context of our understanding and interpretation: a comparison between the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction should indicate that, without the principle of identity, we cannot have the principle of contradiction, we cannot move or speak about the principle of non-contradiction. Where the principle of identity says that "whatever is, is" or, in other words, A is A, the principle of contradiction says, on the other hand, as a kind of corollary, that A cannot be both A and not-A at the same time in the same way.<sup>101</sup> In contradictions, contradictories (polar opposites) cannot be both true. Citing some of Autrecourt's own words: "contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time."<sup>102</sup> Between an affirmation of being and a negation of being, a contradiction must exist (or, in other words, an exclusive disjunction). Something is only known to be true and to exist in a cognitively self-evident way if we can affirm its being; better still, if, rationally, we are forced to affirm its being (it cannot not be, it cannot not exist) and, at the same time too, if we can also deny (if, in fact, we must deny) that it cannot not exist (it must be, it has to be), as we move thus from a first proposition that is rendered in terms of the principle of identity toward a second proposition that is rendered in terms of the principle

---

95Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 460-461.

96Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 463.

97Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 462.

98Weinberg, *Nicholas of Autrecourt*, p. 10.

99Nicholas of Autrecourt, "Letter to Bernard of Arezzo," as quoted by Beuchot, p. 460, citing "Briefe zu B. von Arezzo"; also citing Weinberg, *Nicholaus of Autrecourt*, p. 14.

100Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 463.

101Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 13.

102Autrecourt, "Letter to Bernard of Arezzo," as quoted by Beuchot, p. 460, citing "Briefe zu B. von Arezzo."

of contradiction (or, appositely, according to the principle of non-contradiction). From an affirmation of positivity, we can move toward an affirmation which always knows that positivity excludes negativity as its denial or as its contradiction (the disjunction or lack of agreement which must always exist between being and non-being).

As a consequence thus, in light of the principle of identity, with respect to the possible drawing of any implications about A if we have A, if we should begin with anything which exists in a self-evident kind of way (prior to or apart from possibly attempting any kind of inference), in every implication according to the kind of thinking that we find in Nicholas of Autrecourt, a consequent must be reducible or it should be reducible to its antecedent because of an essential identity which must always exist between a consequent and its antecedent, the truth of a consequent existing as a function of the being and the truth of its originating antecedent.<sup>103</sup> Hence, and as a conclusion that would have to follow from this as a species of first principle in the articulation of Autrecourt's philosophy: from an antecedent, through inference and the kind of speculation which exists in inference, we cannot move toward a knowledge of something that has yet to be known; something which we can begin now to understand and know through the inferences that we are now making as we try to move us from that which we already know toward that which we can now begin to understand and know.<sup>104</sup>

As we move from a simple notion of deduction or inference to a complex notion of deduction or inference: deduction being deduction, in cases thus where no middle term can take us from A to C by way of a commonly shared predicate or variable that we can refer to as B, in a simple consequent or in a simple conclusion as this exists with respect to the principle of identity, nothing more is to be said or nothing more is given to us than that which is first given to us in an antecedent, A. A consequent, as known, allegedly adds nothing to the known which exists in the apprehension of an antecedent. Hence, to refer to a consequent in terms of B (or through some other designation that is not A) is often misleading if, by this means, a real distinction is being suggested. On the other hand, however: if an antecedent is to be designated as A and if its consequent is to be designated as B, only a mental distinction or a logical distinction is to be adverted to. Citing Autrecourt's own words: "From the knowledge that a thing exists it cannot be inferred with evidence reducible to the first principle or to the certitude of the first principle, that some other thing exists."<sup>105</sup> If some other thing exists, it must be known in terms of its own self-evidence and not because some other kind of thing exists with a self-evidence that is proper to it.

In a context which would be tempted to think about the being of real distinctions where A cannot be B and B cannot be A (the reality of one cannot be reduced to the reality of the other), in not being able to move from a being which exists as A to another being which would exist as B, A is not B and B is not A or; in other words, if A is your antecedent and if B, as a consequent, is allegedly the being of some other thing that differs from A (it is not to be identified with A or with some part of A), then, in the light of Autrecourt's teaching, because B or any other consequent is not A, it cannot be known with the

---

103Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 461; also citing Nicholas of Autrecourt in his own words: in all cases of reduction when a consequence can be reduced to its antecedent, "both the antecedent and the consequent are really identical, whether in whole or in part." Cf. Autrecourt, "Letter to Bernard of Arezzo," citing "Briefe zu B. von Arezzo."

104Weinberg, *Nicholas of Autrecourt*, pp. 32-33.

105Autrecourt, "Letter to Bernard of Arezzo," as quoted by Beuchot, p. 462, citing "Briefe zu B. von Arezzo."

same kind of self-evidence or the same degree of self-evidence which happens to belong to A and to our knowledge of A. The self-evidence of A does not lend itself or it does not communicate itself to the reality of B in any kind of necessary, obvious way. If we work within parameters that are determined by the principle of identity where a consequent cannot differ from anything which exists within an antecedent or as simply the antecedent, then, within this context, if we should deny the consequent, we must also deny the the being of the antecedent. The consequent exists within the antecedent or as the antecedent. The two exist together and they stand or fall together. Paraphrasing Autrecourt on the kind of self-evidence which properly belongs to the being of consequents and how this self-evidence is known (how it is to be determined and given to us): on the basis of the identity which allegedly exists between an antecedent and a consequent, we would accordingly have to say that “a consequence is evident if and only if it is *logically impossible* for the antecedent and the opposite of the consequent to be both true [italics mine].”<sup>106</sup> Between an antecedent and the opposite of its consequence, a contradiction would be apparent.<sup>107</sup> It would have to exist. Only where an identity does not exist between an antecedent and a consequent is it possible for us to speak about the presence of a contradiction if the opposite of a consequent is posited as something which is allegedly true. In cases where, in fact, contradictions exist, from the falsehood which pertains to the opposite of a given consequent comes the truth of the consequent (according to the law of logic which exists as the principle of the excluded middle: the falsity of a given thesis necessarily points to the truth of the contrary, opposite position).

To understand the gist of Autrecourt's teaching in a different way, using different words which talk about inferences (as in different kinds of inferences): instead of inferences which would try to move *a priori* from causes to effects or *a posteriori* from effects to causes (respectively, from A to B or from B to A), in Autrecourt a third kind of inference can be alluded to in terms of something which remains within A and which is somehow known within A. In an *a simultaneo* species of inference, apart from the kind of immediacy which exists in our different acts of human sensing, through the immediacy of an intellectual kind of intuition which would exist as a metaphorical intellectual kind of seeing and, allegedly, in the absence of any discursiveness which would seem to exist within the givenness of this type of immediacy, in encountering or apprehending, say, the meaning of a given idea, or the meaning of a concept, or the meaning of a definition, its truth or its reasonableness would be immediately grasped by us as an apt, just conclusion since its truth is vouchsafed to us merely or simply within the terms of a reasonable, non-contradictory specification of a meaning which is given to us within the parameters of an understood idea or from within the parameters of a defined concept.<sup>108</sup> In knowing a given subject, in knowing what a given subject is, we immediately know its predicate: what it is; what it does, what it experiences. The predicate comes from the subject. It exists already within the being of the apprehended subject. In this way thus, A is A or A continues to be A although, in another sense too, it can be argued that a predicate can be known in terms of how it exists within a given subject or how it comes from a given subject if time and thought is taken to think about the meaning and the being of the subject in question, considering it and pondering it. Less quickly or less readily, a predicate can be known in a way which points to how, analytically, it already exists within the being of a

---

106Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 462.

107Weinberg, *Nicholas of Autrecourt*, p. 33.

108Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, eds. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, revised and augmented by Frederick E. Crowe with the collaboration of Elizabeth A. Morelli, Mark D. Morelli, Robert M. Doran, and Thomas V. Daly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 157.

given subject. In either case or despite the mode of our apprehension (whether through the immediacy of intuition or through the discursiveness of our thinking and understanding), with Aristotle, we would say that “the predicate belongs to the subject...in virtue of itself.”<sup>109</sup>

However, in addition to this type of inference, it cannot be denied also that “the unity of a thing with itself” or the being of “A is A” is not something which precludes the possibility that many different things can be said about what this A is.<sup>110</sup> If A has some kind of determination or form, in articulating this determination in a way which determines elements and relations, we should find many predicates which are said to apply or to reside inchoately within the form, the meaning, or the being of a given subject, A. “X is Y’ is seen to lie within the nature of X.”<sup>111</sup> In this context thus, we can get into a species of analytic proposition which would say about A that A is B or C or D *ad infinitum* (relatively speaking). The being of A points to that which is not simply or entirely A (for instance, this or that element or constituent of A) and no contradiction would exist between the being of A and the being of any attributes or conjugates B, C, or D. If, for instance, A is a sensing cognitive subject or if A is an understanding knowing subject, something exists within A that is not entirely A, and that which exists within A and that which also differs from A does not take away from the being or the reality of A. A as A is other than B, C, or D although, in fact, that which exists as B, C, or D is that which contributes or adds to the being of A, A existing as a kind of presupposition or point of departure for a knowledge of B, C, and D. A exists as a possible recipient of different qualities and also as a likely point of origin for the being of other qualities although the degrees of reception and activity are relative (depending on contexts and conditions that elicit activities of different kinds and other contexts and conditions which function as agent objects to effect and to provoke changes in the kind of subjectivity which happens to belong to the being of a given thing or substance).

These things being said thus, if A exists not as an attribute or property but essentially as a thing or substance and if B, C, and D exist as attributes which are not to be identified with A (although they belong to A or they inhere in A), then, if we distinguish between the being of attributes or properties and the being of things or substances that receive properties or who manifest qualities and activities, we can then understand how or why, in Autrecourt, it is said or it is argued (it is implied in some way) that, from the being of a thing or a substance as it exists in itself (as it is seen or conceived to exist in itself, apart from the being of other things), on this basis thus, we cannot derive or move toward the being of some other thing or substance as this other thing or substance exists in itself (as it is seen or as it is conceived to exist in itself) although, from the being of a given thing or substance, we can get to other kinds of beings which would exist as attributes or conjugates. Apart from the being and the notion of relations which would detract from how we would want to think about how substances or things exist in themselves (how they can be conceived to exist in themselves as a distinct species of reality), then, we can only speak about things or substances as they exist in themselves and, on this basis thus, in our arguments and in our reasoning, we cannot move, allude, or prove the being of other things which would exist in their own right as substances or things from the being of other substances or things that, allegedly, we already initially know through some kind of self-evidence that is given to us in the experiences that we have of one kind or another.

Shifting our gears now in another direction: in complex deductions where middle terms are used to

---

109Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 193, n. 2, citing Aristotle.

110Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 22.

111Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 193.

connect a subject to a predicate through the kind of mediation which exists for us through the introduction of a middle term, by this means, something is said about A which belongs to A through a predicate which articulates the meaning or the significance of A. In syllogistic arguments, a conclusion joins a subject and a predicate in a way which points to the being of an identity that is being discovered or known for possibly the first time. Using a commonly employed illustrative example: according to a major premiss, “Every *man* [middle term] is *mortal* [major term]”; according to a minor premiss, “*Socrates* [minor term] is a *man* [middle term]”; and so, in the consequent conclusion, “Therefore *Socrates* [minor term] is *mortal*.”<sup>112</sup> An identity is postulated or it is claimed in each of the three propositions and we move from one identity to the other through a connecting middle term. If A is B; if B is C; therefore, A is C. For this reason, we understand Autrecourt's meaning when he avers that, by this means, “the predicate of the conclusion and the subject [of the major premiss] signify what is really identical.”<sup>113</sup> A continues to be A although more is known about this A given the predicates B and C. But, at the same time too, we also understand Autrecourt when he argues and avers that, from the viewpoint of substances or the being of things which exist as substances (according to the kind of being which belongs to substances), identities in substances cannot be affirmed. Being mortal is not exactly the same thing as being a man and, at the same time too, the thingness or the substantiality of Socrates is not to be equated with the thingness or the substantiality of being a man. If we begin with A, we can say that A is B or A is C or A is D if B, C, and D refer to qualities or modifications of A where, by this means, more is known about the different predicates that are endemic to the nature and the being of A. As noted, A continues to be A through the predicates which exist as B, C, and D, whatever. However, if we move from qualities and attributes that belong to the being of things or substances to the being of things which exist as distinct substances or as distinct things, the distinctiveness or the individuality which belongs to the being of substances precludes any deductions that would have to refer to the being of other distinct, individual substances. Apprehensions of individuality mitigate against apprehensions that would have also to know about the being of other things or substances which exist in their own distinct individuality. If individualities are known through our different acts of experiencing and sensing (whether through our experience of self or our experience of outer, external objects), then other individualities can be known by us only through other acts of self-experiencing and sensing and not through any acts of inference which are not to be equated with our acts of self-experiencing and sensing, differing as they do from the givens which belong to us through our different acts of self-experiencing and sensing.

Hence, as a further consequence and in returning to a teaching which says that we cannot move from a knowledge about A to a knowledge about B, if we should think now explicitly about the principle of causality and the ramifications of this kind of teaching as this refers to the principle of causality, when we apply this type of teaching and understanding to questions which would ask if we can move from the reality of a given thing or substance to the reality of a second thing or substance whose truth we would affirm, we would have to conclude and we would also have to understand why, properly, we cannot infer that, from our knowledge of any one thing or substance, we can conclude or move to affirm the existence of some other thing or substance that would truly differ from the being of the first thing or substance. Through a reduction which says that the consequent is to be identified either with

---

<sup>112</sup>Scott M. Sullivan, *An Introduction to Traditional Logic: Classical Reasoning for Contemporary Minds* (North Charleston, SC: Booksurge Publishing, 2006), p. 122.

<sup>113</sup>Autrecourt, “Letter to Bernard of Arezzo,” as quoted by Beuchot, p. 462, citing “Briefe zu B. von Arezzo.”



an antecedent or with a part of a given antecedent<sup>114</sup> (or, in other words, reiteratively, A is A or A=A and from A we cannot get B as another external thing or A does not imply B as a distinct thing or substance), then, if we should think about the notion or the principle of causality (which is commonly known and accepted by us within the context of our ordinary human thinking and which is alleged to exist within the context of our scientific thinking and analysis), and if we attend to the real difference that allegedly always exists between a cause and an effect, then, from effects B or from anything which exists allegedly as an effect B, we cannot conclude to the existence of a cause A that we can understand and know for how or why it exists as a cause (or as a species of prior condition, as a distinct reality). The effect B, as an effect, is not identifiable with its alleged cause A and, in addition, it does not exist as allegedly part or an element of an operative cause A. Similarly and conversely, because of a real difference or a real distinction which allegedly exists between A and B, we cannot move from causes to effects (the cause is not its effect; it is not what it makes or produces): hence, in Autrecourt's own words, “no demonstration can be such whereby from the existence (of the cause), the existence of the effect is demonstrated.”<sup>115</sup> An insufficiency which exists within the order of our thinking and understanding as regards the possibility of knowing about causal relations accordingly points to an insufficiency or a lack of relation and dependency which exists within the order of concretely existing things. In the earlier thought and philosophy of the Muslim philosopher, al-Ghazālī (c. 1058 – 1111),<sup>116</sup> we have words and text which point to the likely origin of this teaching that is later proposed and given to us by Nicholas of Autrecourt when he was thinking and speaking about the principle of causality and how we should think about the rationality or the usefulness of this principle. According to al-Ghazālī:

The connection between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect is not necessary, according to us. But [with] any two things, where “this” is not “that” and “that” is not “this” and where neither the affirmation of the one entails the affirmation of the other nor the negation of the one entails negation of the other, it is not a necessity of the existence of the one that the other should exist, and it is not a necessity of the nonexistence of the one that the other should not exist—for example, the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation [...] and so on to [include] all [that is] observable among connected things in medicine, astronomy, arts, and crafts. Their connection is due to the prior decree of God, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable of separation.<sup>117</sup>

---

114 Within this context, in his *History of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 263, Copleston notes that every proposition (as a consequent) is reducible to its antecedent in one of two ways: immediately, if its predicate is contained within the identity or the “concept of the subject” (the predicate exists within the subject); or mediately, if “the conclusion of an argument is identical with part of the premise or antecedent.” As Copleston illustrates in n. 2: if all Xs are Ys, to say that this X is Y is to say something which is part of the antecedent or the more general premiss which says that all Xs are Ys.

115 Autrecourt, “Letter to Bernard of Arezzo,” as quoted by Beuchot, p. 463, citing “Briefe zu B. von Arezzo.”

116 See “Al-Ghazali,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Ghazali> (accessed May 30, 2017).

117 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, as cited by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Causation in Arabic and Islamic Thought,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-causation/#AlGhaNoNecConArg> (accessed May 30, 2017). Within natural phenomena as this is given to us initially through our acts of sensing, necessary connections are not to be claimed or posited. No logical connection exists between a cause and an effect. Hence, if we should refer to an

More specifically for instance, by a kind of application, within a tradition of thought that comes to us from al-Ghazālī and Nicholas of Autrecourt: we cannot conclude either to the existence of God as if he exists as some kind of primary cause who is ordered to the being of other causes or to the existence of causes which would exist within the naturally existing world as an ordering of secondary causes, each of these causes referring to agents which exist as subordinate, created substances or which exist as subordinate, created things, each type of cause (whether primary or secondary) existing with a fullness that does not detract from the fullness and the being of the other causes. We cannot determine if an effect comes from a secondary cause *as a secondary cause* or how, in some way and at the same time, it also comes from the primary causality of God in a manner which points to how God exists as a

---

example that al-Ghazālī uses, with respect to the burning of cotton when in contact with fire, according to al-Ghazālī's argument or according to the presupposition that he posits as his point of departure:

...we allow the possibility of the occurrence of the contact without the burning, and we allow as possible the occurrence of the cotton's transformation into burnt ashes without contact with the fire. [The philosophers], however, deny the possibility of this.

The contact which exists between fire and cotton does not entail the truth of an affirmation which would want to claim that the burning of the cotton is to be explained by the contact or the presence of fire, fire having a nature or a property of some kind which points to how it exists as a cause. Some other explanation can be alluded to (in fact, some other explanation needs to be alluded to) since, without risk of contradiction, nothing precludes our possibly moving toward a conclusion which would want to claim that events in our world occur as a consequence of divine willing (how they are divinely willed by God because of an omnipotent causality which belongs solely to God and to no other). No contradiction arises if we should hold that events within nature are to be regarded as "a direct product of divine intervention." Cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Ghazali> (accessed May 30, 2017). So great in fact is God's omnipotence that no other causes are truly needed. All other causes are superfluous and so secondary causes have not to be known or acknowledged with respect to any kind of reality which truly belongs to them. By way of further explanation and as a theological note: if, within the religion of Islam, the only truly unpardonable, unforgivable sin is worshipping a being that is other than God, and if something which is other than God is seen to exist as an effective creative cause, then one best proceeds (one best avoids the dangers of infidelity and polytheism) if one supposes that, despite appearances, God acts directly "to create whatever takes place in the world: things, events, and even volitions in the hearts of men." Secondary causes are not to be regarded as real causes, as having a contribution of their own to make. Cf. Rémi Brague, "On natural law in Islam: Some preliminary remarks," (Paris I/LMU München), p. 6. An initial reading of things points to a tension which exists between primary and secondary causes since, as noted, if God's causality is truly omnipotent, then other causes are not needed. To think about the possible being of other causes is to obfuscate or to divert our attention away from that which exists as the power of God's causality although, on the other hand, from the viewpoint of another perspective, if we should attend initially to the unrestrictedness of God's understanding (the greatness of this understanding) and how this understanding is perfectly united to the actuation of God's willing and doing (governing this willing and doing), then a context is created for an understanding which knows that the use of secondary causes points to a fuller or to a richer notion of God's divine omnipotence: an omnipotence which is all the greater (it exists as a larger, vaster thing) because, in fact, it is able to work with secondary causes in a way which creates and which governs a world that exists as a larger, better, more wonderful thing, the use of secondary causes

fundamental point of origin for the being of all things: as the primary cause or as the first cause of all things through an ordering of primary and secondary causes that exist together as an ordered whole (this absence of rationality, as this refers to God and the providence of God's government, accordingly pointing to a voluntarist or to a willful notion of God and the kind of government which He would be exercising in this context where, here, God is not conceived in terms of the ordering and the mediation of his understanding and knowing and how he exists as an unrestricted act of ordering and understanding but in terms of how, instead, he exists as an unrestricted act of willing and doing that is not conditioned or which is not informed by how He also fully exists (allegedly) as an unrestricted act of knowing and understanding:<sup>118</sup> as someone who uses all manner and condition of causes, both in their individual success and in their individual failure, to achieve goods and an order of perfection that only God understands and knows and which only God can bring into its own order of being and existence).<sup>119</sup> By way of a further explanation that can possibly add to the clarity of our understanding:

To understand the meaning and the reality of a divinely ordered causality of subordinate causes which exist at different levels (sometimes referred to as an order of subordination), please contrast it with an opposing view which tends to think and speak about a causality of concurrence where, between the causality of God and the causality of all other things, a lack of coordination or a kind of opposition is to be supposed and postulated: a tension or an essential conflict which would exist thus if we were to assume that God's causality does not usually or normally express itself through the being and the activity of lesser causes which would exist, in one way or another, as an ordering of co-operative causes (hence, as an ordering of instrumental causes), having each fully a causality of their own in a way which, at the same time, expresses and points to the being of God's causality and which does not detract from the kind of causality which, alone, properly belongs to God. However, in the context now of an opposing, contrary point of view: if, essentially, lesser causes do not exist as instrumental causes or, in other words, if they have a causality of their own which exists apart from the kind of causality which properly belongs to God, conditions are created for an understanding of things which points to the being and the qualities of another kind of world: one which begins to think and to assume that the kind of causality which belongs to one type of cause (whether of creatures or of God) would always have to take away from the causality which properly belongs to the other type of cause (whether of

---

pointing to the awesomeness of God's power and not as something which would take away or which would subtract from the greatness of this divine power.

<sup>118</sup>Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamic Crisis* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2010), p. 56 & n. 47, citing Nicholas of Autrecourt and Simon van den Bergh, "Introduction," Averroes, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*.

<sup>119</sup>Augustine, *Enchiridion*, c. 11 and c. 27, as cited by Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, p. 386. As St. Augustine proposes and argues: nothing happens within our world outside a divine scheme of things. Within this scheme, God accomplishes all of his goals and objectives through three forms of volition that belong to Him: God acts through a direct willing of all moral goods; through an indirect willing of all physical evils and the evils of punishment; and lastly, through permitting all the moral evils which can exist among beings who have been endowed with a freedom that allows them to make moral choices (rather for things that happen to be good, or things that lacking in goodness, existing thus as evils and, as evils, existing as privations of being and goodness).

creatures or of God). In other words, God's causality can exist apart from the being of all lesser or other causes and, in fact, in this context, God's causality would best exist (it would exist more fully and most supremely) if it exists apart from the being of all the other causes that exist and, at the same time too (although conversely), lesser causes best enjoy the kind of causality which belongs to them if they exist on their own (they would exist more fully) if they exist apart from the kind of causality which, alone, properly belongs only to God. To avoid a point of view and a way of living that would detract from the authority and the influence of God's causality, one emphasizes God's causality in a way which tries to cancel or which tries to ignore the kind of causality which allegedly belongs to God's creatures (the being of lesser causes) and, conversely too, to avoid a point of view and a way of living that would take away from the kind of causality which properly belongs to the being of created, contingent causes, one tries to emphasize the being of secondary causes in a way which tries to exclude the kind of causality which properly belongs only to God. A new species of inquisitive heuristic would be established thus where as a consequence, in our later inquiries, in order to understand the kind of causality which belongs to God, one best ignores the being of all lesser causes and then too, in order to understand the kind of causality which properly belongs to the being of contingent things, one best ignores the kind of causality which properly belongs only to God: how, allegedly, this causality does exist within our created, contingent world and how, in fact, it conditions and orders the being of all lesser things (the being of all lesser causes), giving to these causes a unity, a focus, a direction, and an explanation which, otherwise, they would not have.<sup>120</sup> Through a kind of separation that is supposed or which is introduced, secondary causes which belong to the being of our world are not understood if we should refer to the being of a transcendental cause and the being of a transcendental cause is not understood if we should refer to the being of lesser causes. Secondary causes cease to exist or to be known as secondary causes and God as the primary cause of all things.

Citing some of Nicholas's own words to this effect, we cannot conclude, for instance, that “if any matter has been produced, God has been produced [God as the term of a conclusion that, supposedly, we can draw or which we can elicit as the product or the conclusion of our understanding: the existence of contingent material things points to the necessity and the being of an immaterial cause who exists as God].”<sup>121</sup> Similarly, from an “act of understanding,” we cannot conclude that “intelligence exists” as some kind of agent or thing and, from an “act of willing,” that “will exists” as some kind of agent or thing.<sup>122</sup> In general, as we have been already noting to some extent, according to the wording of one commonly cited translation, “from the fact that something is known to exist it cannot be inferred

---

<sup>120</sup>On the difference which exists between understanding a causality of subordination and then understanding a causality of concurrence, see the discussion that we can find in Charles Morerod's work, *Ecumenism and Philosophy: Philosophical Questions for a Renewal of Dialogue*, trans. Therese C. Scarpelli (Ann Arbor: MI, Sapientia Press, 2006), pp. 59-79.

<sup>121</sup>“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #564. I assume here that the “production of God” refers to a conclusion that is drawn or which is produced when we move from apprehensions which refer to effects toward a second apprehension which would refer to the existence of an explanatory cause.

<sup>122</sup>“Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #566.

evidently...that another thing exist";<sup>123</sup> or, according to other words which have been used to communicate the terms of this thesis: with truth, it cannot be said that "if one thing (effect) exists, it follows that another thing (cause) must exist."<sup>124</sup> In causality, in the assumptions and the beliefs that we have about the meaning and the reality of causality, a lack of rationality is to be ascribed to it, the principle of causality (a lack of rationality is to be admitted according to Autrecourt) since if any A and B exist as two distinct entities, if a real distinction exists between them, then, no contradiction exists if we should say that A exists and if we should also say that B does not exist. As we have noted above already, the existence of one thing does not imply the existence of another thing and, similarly, the non-existence of one thing does not imply the non-existence of something else. From A as a thing, we cannot go to B as a thing, and from B as a thing, we cannot go to A as a thing. Logically, according to the meaning of the principle of contradiction (and the kind of grounding which it has in the principle of identity), we cannot take a predicate and affirm it of a subject "for which nothing proves that it belongs to the subject necessarily."<sup>125</sup> Hence, if we advert to this thesis as if it exists as a species of first principle in the conclusions and the elaborations of Autrecourt's philosophy (as this refers to his understanding of human cognition), we can understand why, as a species of causality, final causality is not to be regarded as a principle that merits any proper role or place within the context of our critical human thinking (despite its importance as an explanatory principle in the scientific methodology that comes to us from the corpus of Aristotle's philosophy). Allegedly, in words which would seem to come to us from Autrecourt's manner of speech, it is not to be admitted "that somebody knows evidently that some thing is the end of another thing."<sup>126</sup> If a final cause, a purpose, or an end is not reducible to the being of a given thing (if it does not exist within the being of a given thing), then we cannot go beyond the being of a given thing in order to speak about this something else which we would designate as B (B being the final cause that we would like to understand and know). If, in their distinctiveness, A and B exist in some kind of way at the same time (simultaneously), if any kind of relation should exist between them, we would have to speak about an accidental species of relation (a circumstantial or a material relation which would exist as a spatial temporal juxtaposition which, in fact, exists). It happens to exist. Hence, it would exist as an inadvertent relation or as an inadvertent association that is known by us if we should refer to whatever is simply given to us through our various acts of human sensing.

The lack of rationality which exists thus with respect to the principle of causality, in turn, implies a lack of rationality which would exist with respect to inferences that would have us move from the apparent experience of attributes or properties which come and go within the data of our conscious experience toward a knowledge about how these attributes exist as accidents or conjugates which exist within something else which allegedly, as a bearer of attributes, is something which is known to exist for us as some kind of substance, essence, or thing<sup>127</sup> although, admittedly, or operationally, when we infer and hold that a lack of rationality in one case points to a lack of rationality that exists in another case, we would be violating Autrecourt's own arguments to the effect that, properly speaking, we cannot move from the existence or the non-existence of a given thing to the like existence or the non-existence of

---

123Autrecourt, as cited by Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 264.

124Autrecourt, as quoted by Beuchot, p. 463.

125Autrecourt, "Letter to Bernard of Arezzo," as quoted by Beuchot, p. 463, citing "Briefe zu B. von Arezzo."

126Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 463, citing Denifle and Chatelain, eds., p. 577, citing Autrecourt's second letter to Bernard of Arezzo.

127Beuchot, "Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 462.

something else. However, this point aside, to explain the terms of meaning that Nicholas is employing through the words that he is using: in speaking about the meaning of a substance or thing and the meaning of attributes or accidents, we commonly move from attributes, properties, or accidents toward apprehensions of the being of a substance or thing from the kind of effect which, in fact, exists whenever we think about how attributes or properties exist because, allegedly, for an understanding of attributes or accidents, we must suppose or conclude that something other exists as an actor or carrier, or as a bearer of attributes or accidents: a something, a substance, or a thing which exists as a subject of attributes and also as a recipient of other attributes. Attributes typically refer to that which is itself not an attribute but which, instead, exists as a unity or as a center of activity and reception (hence, something which exists as a substance or thing and which does not exist as an accident or property).

However, as we have been noting, because within the principle of contradiction we find a grounding which refers to the principle of identity and the kind of primacy which exists with respect to the principle of identity where  $A=A$ , then, in the kind of understanding which Autrecourt has, inferences which would try to speak about the existence of substances or things are to be regarded always with a degree of skepticism and suspicion. Our descriptions of things, as descriptions, can suggest, through their association, the possible existence of causes and how, possibly, causes can be conceived in terms which would speak about the being of substances or things. If X, then Y as we move from a contingently existing thing or a contingently existing datum toward something which exists in a less contingent manner, causes having a greater degree of reality than any effects which could possibly come from them. However, apart from how we describe any givens which would seem to belong to us within the data of our sensible experience, anything which is simply given to us in an apparently self-evident way does not exist for us in a way which would have to imply the *necessity* of its existence nor, in fact, the existence of something else which would be other than that which appears to be given to us within the contents or the data of our sensible experience.<sup>128</sup> We presume too much if we should try to move from the givens of our sensible experience toward something which is not also immediately given to us within the givens of our sensing experience. We cannot rationally move from the givens of sense toward apprehensions that would refer and know about the being of agent causes which would exist as substances or things – existing as causing or effecting substances (as substances having a thingness or a subjectivity that is causative or productive of the possible being of other things). From our experiences of sense data, we cannot move toward apprehensions that would truly know anything about the existence and the being of things as these things exist within a world which transcends the being and the reality of our personal existence and the kind of subjectivity which happens to belong to us in the manner of our lived human existence.<sup>129</sup> Hence, as a conclusion that is drawn by Autrecourt: on the basis of these arguments, it is to be noted that “Aristotle did not have [any] evident knowledge of [the being of] any substance,”<sup>130</sup> nothing other than the being of his own soul.<sup>131</sup>

As a final note then and as a further corollary, when we attend to a number of other propositions which are ascribed to Nicholas of Autrecourt and which are to be regarded as philosophical errors (in the understanding and the judgment of the Church), we find that the emphasis on identity (the primacy of

---

128Julius R. Weinberg, “Nicolas of Autrecourt,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, v. 5, 1972 ed., p. 500.

129Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 461.

130Autrecourt, “Letter to Bernard of Arezzo,” as quoted by Beuchot, p. 463, citing “Briefe zu B. von Arezzo.”

131Beuchot, “Nicholas of Autrecourt,” *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 462.

identity in relation to the principle of contradiction) precludes our possibly moving toward rational evaluations and judgments which would claim to know anything about the existence of different kinds of being and about how these different levels of being can be distinguished from each other in a way which would point to a hierarchy which could possibly exist within a general order of existing things. In Autrecourt's own words: "in any demonstrated matter whatever no one knows clearly that in truth it surpasses all others in nobility,"<sup>132</sup> "in any demonstrated matter no one knows clearly that this thing is not God, if by God we understand the most noble substance;"<sup>133</sup> and "whatever exists in the universe is better that, than not that."<sup>134</sup> When we cannot move from one thing to another in a way which can join distinct realities with each other in a manner which reveals the being of a larger whole (a whole which would exist as some kind of universal, universalized intelligibility), we cannot determine how, in light of this order or from the perspective of this known order, we can know about the being of constitutive individual variables in terms of their individual weight, their function, and their value (the individual contribution which, in fact, each makes toward the totality of the whole and how, at times, this contribution is enhanced because of how individual variables are related to other elements which, in each in their own way, exist as individual determinations). If, at best, we can only know about the individuality of individual things, a wider kind of knowing is precluded that would like to think about things in terms which would differ from the experience of individuality that is always given to us within the immediacy of our initial acts of human knowing (our acts of human sensing), prior to our asking of any questions which, by their asking, could possibly question the sufficiency of immediacy as an adequate criterion for the kind of knowing which properly belongs to us as human beings, existing and living as we do as human subjects, having desires and aspirations that would want to move us from immediacies that are given to us toward other kinds of being which are not given to us in terms that refer to the being of immediacies.

Summing things up then in a way which refers to how the Church understands the nature of our natural acts of human cognition (the acts of cognition which properly belong to us as human beings), from the censures that were pronounced by the Church's Magisterium in 1346/1347 in the context of an extraordinary exercise of the Church's teaching authority: through the principle or the law of the excluded middle as we have this from our understanding of logic, we can conclude that, obviously and in a more public manner,<sup>135</sup> the Church is adhering to her belief in the rightness of inference as this

---

132"Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #562.

133"Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #563.

134"Errors Nicholas of Autrecourt," *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 203, #569.

135We allude here to an earlier distinction or an earlier reference which has been made to the teaching of the Church's ordinary Magisterium although, when we explicitly speak about extraordinary exercises of the Church's teaching office or if, implicitly, we refer to extraordinary exercises of the Church's Magisterium, we must always speak about declarations and articulations of teaching which presuppose beliefs, teachings, and values that have been commonly held and taught by the Church's bishops (in communion with each other and in communion also with the Pope). Whenever a given teaching or thesis is rejected by the Church's teaching office (whether by ordinary or extraordinary exercises of the Church's teaching office), the more clearly and obviously it is rejected and the more often and frequently it is rejected, following from this, as a kind of inevitable consequence, conditions are enhanced and created which encourage articulations and specifications of belief and truth that come from the minds and writings of thoughtful Christians (philosophers and theologians). Teachings emerge which, in their wording and conceptuality, are not explicitly or necessarily taught by the Church's official Magisterium although in fact, what is taught and expounded by other persons who are

occurs for us when, in our cognition, we move from prior acts of cognition toward later acts of cognition. A skeptical understanding about the nature and the powers of our human understanding is not to be admitted to the degree that it would hold to an idealist form of immanentism which holds or which believes that our subjectivity is to be regarded as a self-enclosed kind of thing. This skepticism or this solipsism does not reflect or point us toward the transcendental orientations which exist within the being of our desires and interests although apparently, within the context of the Church's belief and teaching, the kind of faith which we should have in the powers of our human cognition has not yet been measured or spoken about in a way which would clearly distinguish it from the kind of faith which is needed if, as human beings, we are to hold to the teachings which exist within our religious beliefs and if also, through our religious faith and beliefs, our acts of reasoning are to be encouraged or

---

functioning as thinkers or teachers, is accepted by the Church's Magisterium as legitimate. The lack of contradiction, the lack of censure from the Church's teaching office, in turn points to truths that would seem to have become a part of the Church's ordinary teaching and, gradually, when this occurs or as this occurs, new conditions are created that serve to encourage a possible later acceptance that could come in time when the Church's Magisterium begins to use the thought and expression of thoughtful Christians in ways that are ordered toward a better statement of the Church's official teaching.

For an example which illustrates this point, we can turn to how, in responding to the thought of Antonio de Rosmini-Serbati (d. 1855), intuition has been understood in a context which refers to how or why intuition has been rejected as an adequate explanation for the kind of cognition which properly belongs to us as human beings. When the Church rejects a given teaching, a greater understanding of this teaching can emerge in the order of human intentions with respect to a desire for greater understanding even if it is the case, for some, that this desire is limited to understanding why a given teaching should not to be received by the Church and the ranks of the faithful. As we attend thus to a combination of primary and secondary sources, we find that the following type of explanation is commonly being provided:

In theology of Antonio de Rosmini, one finds an understanding about human cognition where human beings work from an initial, ideal, indeterminate notion or idea of being which underlies and penetrates every kind of human inquiry and which is necessarily presupposed by all our acts of human knowing. Cf. Antonio Rosmini, "Origin of the Idea of Being," *The Origin of Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Terence Watson and Denis Cleary (Durham: Rosmini House, 1989), pp. 8-41. This notion of being is implied in every judgment that we make as human beings. Cf. Gerald A. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), p. 120. Without it, nothing can happen within the happening or the event of our human knowing. This idea of being exists in an "essentially objective" manner as an intellectual object which immediately and perennially illuminates the mind from without, externally, without necessarily eliciting or effecting any effect in how our minds are supposed to respond and act. Cf. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 ed., s.v. "Rosmini and Rosminianism," by D. Hickey; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio\\_Rosmini-Serbati](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Rosmini-Serbati) (February 26, 2010); <http://www.rosmini-in-english.org/Weblife/LifeC2A8.htm> (February 28, 2010). This ideal,



strengthened in a way which can be understood, faith or confidence in one encouraging faith or confidence in the other (vice versa).

With respect then to our ordinary acts of human cognition as we would seem to ordinarily experience these acts: from A we can move toward a knowledge of B if, in some way, in the kind of knowing which belongs to us as human beings, we can rightly engage in activities which would move us from something that is initially self-evident and obvious to us toward something that is not as self-evident and as obvious as the first, initially, but which can grow in self-evidence and so become more obvious to us if, through an understanding of ourselves in our human cognition, we can know about how, within our cognition, passive elements and active elements are to be distinguished from each other in a way

---

initial, indeterminate notion of being is self-evidently and intuitively known by us through a form of mental seeing which can never err since, by this seeing or in this seeing, no judgments of any kind are being made by us as human beings (the seeing exists before or prior to any kind of judgment) and errors only exist whenever later we shift into judgments. What is seen in this notion of being is distinct from and it is opposed to a mind which sees the notion that it sees.

Hence, in the self-revelation of being which occurs, the mind makes no contribution of its own because what exists as “an unconditionally necessary object cannot derive its intelligibility from a contingent mind.” Cf. McCool, p. 120. However, in any later knowing of anything which can be known by us initially through any act of sense, the human mind works with this ideal notion of being to apply it to a datum of sense, converting this datum into that which exists as an object of experience. In human knowing, a process of objectification creates divisions between subjects and objects. The existence of a real distinction here between an intellectual object and any act of mental seeing which occurs in an intuition (a real distinction between a knower and what is known) accordingly recalls the fact that, for us, a similar real distinction exists between light as it exists in a material, external way and any eye which sees or beholds the light which it externally sees. Cf. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, trans. Michael G. Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 255. Only, allegedly, by an abstractive species of thinking can human beings come to realize that an initial, indeterminate notion of being exists innately within our minds to guide it from within as a species of inner light. Without its already existing within our minds as the “form of one's understanding” or as the “light of one's intelligence,” no kind of inquiry can occur about any given topic or issue. Cf. McCool, p. 122.

Hence, as a sample, from this kind of reflective activity which seeks to move toward larger measures of understanding and a more articulate form of expression in the wake of what Rosmini teaches and in the wake of what the Church's Magisterium also teaches, the general result is a spur that is given to the wording of more articulate philosophies of mind and, with time and the experience of further reflection, through a growing interiorization of what is being thought and said, this experience

which points to a species of dynamic union that exists between the two: a form of co-operation which exists as a species of mutual causality or as a species of mutual help or, in other words, as a species of mutual priority that can point to how or why our human knowing can exist in a self-assembling kind of way, legitimately moving from a condition of potency toward a condition of act as, in fact, we move from a knowledge of A toward a possible knowledge of B even if, between A and B, a real distinction always exists, B in its being being not reducible to A in its being. Depending on the kinds of questions which are being asked, in some contexts, a knowledge of A suggests or it moves us toward a possible knowledge of B although, in other contexts, a knowledge of A could be insufficient or unproductive, not leading us toward apprehensions which would know about the being and the reality of B. If a possible knowledge of A includes a knowledge which knows about its contingency, then, from this contingency, a kind of analysis can move us toward an understanding which would speak about the necessity of a cause or a reason which, in its being, is to be regarded as an explanation of contingency. Hence, it is lacking in contingency. But if, on the other hand however, the contingency of A is not known by us as a point of departure, then, no analysis of contingency can possibly lead us to a cause or reason that would be lacking in any kind of contingency.

Whenever, in our knowing, we accordingly move from A to B and possibly, from there, to C and D *ad infinitum*, the belief in the rightness and the validity of our inferences does thus suggest that, in the actuality or in the activity of our human cognition, there exists a vector within it which is always moving us from a knowledge of A toward a later knowledge of B, and so on from there toward other possible determinations. In the order which is constitutive of our human cognition, some kind of constructive element has to be alluded to: an element that does not suppose or require that there should be any contradictions between A as a starting point and anything that would eventually follow as B, C, or D (and so on) and, at the same time too, an element which determines and which can add new predicates to a predicate which had been known by us at our point of departure A when, in A, a given predicate exists within a given subject that is cited as A. In the kind of analysis which exists within the context of our self-inquiry and in the knowledge that we come to, yes, definitely, we can begin with a subject predicate which exists in A or which exists as A. But, as we move from A, as we move beyond A, other predicates can be discovered that do not require any kind of rejection or denial of that which we had known at A or which exists at A. What is known at A is known more fully in fact for the predicate which it is if it can be elaborated or differentiated in a way which adduces implications of one kind or another, pointing to a range of consequences which exist and which should be adverted to if, at the beginning of things (relatively speaking), we are to begin with something which is known at A and which exists as A. We can know about predicates which exist within A and we can know about predicates which exist in a way which is exterior to A, effecting or causing A in some way. A fuller knowledge of A or an adequate understanding of A requires forms of inquiry that lead us to things and predicates which exist as B, C, and D.

In the understanding of human cognition which thus comes to us from Nicholas of Autrecourt, in its skepticism and in its radical criticism, its principal defect appears to be its simplicity: its overt simplicity. The passivity which does admittedly exist within our human cognition is not joined or it is not complemented by a species of activity which also exists within the fabric of our human cognition, an activity which is also proper to our acts of our human cognition and which allows us to think about

---

of articulateness can begin gradually to seep into the beliefs and values of Catholics as they practice the kind of faith which they profess, relating it to the meaning which sustains and informs how and why we are to exist as human beings.

the possibility of our having different cognitional options as regards the possibility of our growing in our self-understanding and about how, through this work, we can distinguish between one given understanding of human cognition and another species of understanding that can be given to us about the nature of our human cognition. If it is said about the philosophy and thought of both Nicholas of Autrecourt and David Hume that their theories of mind both point to an inventiveness and a dexterity that belongs to the meaning of their suppositions and to their acts of cognitive speculation as regards that which could be regarded as an adequate philosophy of the human mind (a philosophy of human cognition), this inventiveness and this dexterity, in its performance, should accordingly point to a species of active potency which also exists within the being of our human cognition, an active potency which would have to differ from any kind of passive potency that, as a potency, is seen to be determinative of a fundamental form of skepticism that reputedly belongs to the philosophies of mind that are to be associated with the thinking and the conceptuality of these two philosophers. On the contrary, allegations which speak about the radical passivity of our human acts of cognition are always to be denied and rejected as soon as we engage in any kind of argument which would point to a species of open ended, incomplete movement which always endemically belongs to us as human beings and which always exists within us (within our human cognition) whenever we try to prove the truth of any given thesis. If our passive potency is entirely lacking in any movement, in our active potency we find a species of incomplete movement which is partially in act and which exists, in its own way also, in a condition of potency: it is receptive to realizations that can be given to it as, in our own way, we try to move from a condition of not understanding and knowing toward a condition that now understands and knows something that had not yet been understood and known.

In the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, al-Ghazālī provides the most celebrated critique of Arabic Aristotelian accounts of causation. Al-Ghazālī's first and most influential argument against his philosopher opponents appears to target Avicenna's necessitation thesis. He writes,

The connection between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect is not necessary, according to us. But [with] any two things, where "this" is not "that" and "that" is not "this" and where neither the affirmation of the one entails the affirmation of the other nor the negation of the one entails negation of the other, it is not a necessity of the existence of the one that the other should exist, and it is not a necessity of the nonexistence of the one that the other should not exist—for example, the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation [...] and so on to [include] all [that is] observable among connected things in medicine, astronomy, arts, and crafts. Their connection is due to the prior decree of God, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable of separation. (al-Ghazālī IP: 166)

Al-Ghazālī denies that natural phenomena involve necessary connections, using as his main example the burning of cotton when in contact with fire:

For we allow the possibility of the occurrence of the contact without the burning, and we allow as possible the occurrence of the cotton's transformation into burnt ashes without contact with the fire. [The philosophers], however, deny the possibility of this. (al-Ghazālī 2000: 166–7)

### **On the Impossibility or the Possibility of Truth in Predictions**

Turning now to another set of condemnations that, in its own way, adds to our understanding about

how the Church understands the natural powers of the human intellect (as it exists and as it operates independently of God's saving grace), in 1474, in *Ad Christi vicarii*, Pope Sixtus IV censured a set of philosophical errors that were ascribed to the thought and work of "Peter de Rivo" (d. 1499) and which pertain to "the Truth of Future Contingencies."<sup>136</sup> These errors of Peter de Rivo (five in number) are judged to be objectionable: "scandalous and deviating from the path of Catholic faith." According to the Church's understanding of de Rivo's position, according to de Rivo, when we encounter texts and propositions which are to be regarded as prophecies or predictions (this will happen or this other thing will happen), we are to hold that these predications about future events are not to be regarded as true affirmations of being (they are not true in any kind of literal sense).<sup>137</sup> Their truth value is to be regarded as indeterminate. Citing three cases (three errors) which are allegedly taken from the teaching of Peter de Rivo: (1) when Elizabeth predicts that Mary will "bring forth a son" and that she will "call his name Jesus," she is making a statement which is lacking in truth. The prediction or allegation of fact which is made should not be regarded as an affirmation which truly knows a truth. Similarly (2), when, after the resurrection, Christ speaks about the consequent fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the same judgment must be made. Predictions which speak about the event of a coming future fulfillment are not to be regarded as true propositions (although, admittedly, as above with the words, the prediction of Elizabeth to Mary, nothing is said explicitly in these papal censures about the falsity of a prediction which is being made or given). Lastly (3), in a prediction which comes to us from St. Paul when he speaks about how, in the Old Testament, propositions abound which speak about the reality of future events – these predictions should also be seen as lacking in truthfulness. In other words, in these cases (and in other similar cases), the truthfulness or the reality of future events cannot be paired or they should not be paired with the alleged truthfulness of any predictions which, in religion, would exist as prophecies but which, in philosophy, would exist as future contingent propositions or which would exist, more simply, as future contingencies, as future contingents, or as future propositions. The differences which exist in terms of conceptuality do not point to any formal differences which exist in terms of the possible meaning or significance.

To explain the kind of problem which exists when we think about the kind of reference which exists when we think about future contingent propositions: simply put, between a prediction and its fulfillment, a contradiction or a difference is to be detected. A contradiction (a difference) is to be alluded to and, *qua* contradiction or difference, this contradiction needs to be overcome or, in some way, it needs to be transcended. Between the voicing of a prediction and the event of its fulfillment, some kind of positive intelligible link needs to be found. On the one hand, yes, the truth of a prediction, as a truth, suggests the necessity or the eventuality of its later fulfillment and so, as a consequence, this necessity seems to detract from the contingency of future events that are being predicted. At the same time too, the truth of a prediction also takes away from the contingency of human beings who would exist as responsible agents or who could exist as the subjects of possible actions that can occur at some time in the future (at a later date).<sup>138</sup> Hence, if we are to save the

---

<sup>136</sup>Pope Sixtus IV, "Errors of Peter de Rivo (concerning the Truth of Future Contingencies)," *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 234, #719-723.

<sup>137</sup>"Errors of Peter de Rivo," *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 234, #719-721.

<sup>138</sup>Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Problem\\_of\\_future\\_contingents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Problem_of_future_contingents) (accessed May 24, 2015); Jonathan Evans, "Peter de Rivo and the Problem of Future Contingents," *Carminae Philosophiae: Journal of the International Boethius Society*, vol. 10 (2001): 39-40; also available at [https://www.academia.edu/4866858/Peter\\_de\\_Rivo\\_and\\_the\\_Problem\\_of\\_Future\\_Contingents](https://www.academia.edu/4866858/Peter_de_Rivo_and_the_Problem_of_Future_Contingents) (accessed May 24, 2015).

contingency of later future events, for reasons of prudence, it would be best if we should speak about a proper lack of truth (a proper lack of determination which exists with respect to prior affirmations of truth) as this exists when we attend to the kind of claim that is being made in the wording of a prediction and which is given within the content of a future contingent proposition. Within this context, with de Rivo (and others), we should say that future contingents are lacking in a truth value which should properly belong to them if we should try to suppose or to assume that the truth value of a future contingent is akin to the truth value of a past contingent and akin to the truth value of a present contingent. Hence, as de Rivo seems to argue and to conclude (as he appears, in fact, to argue and to conclude): we cannot go from the truth of a future contingent proposition to the truth of a future event which eventually comes to pass. The truth of the one does not reveal the truth of the other; the truth of the antecedent, the truth of the consequent. According to de Rivo in his judgment, a lack of truth exists within the affirmations of a future contingent proposition (an indeterminacy of truth) although, in the listing of errors that comes to us from Pope Sixtus, nothing is said within these censures about the place and the role of falsehood and the possible presence of any falsehoods (falsehoods which should exist in some kind of necessary way with respect to the meaning or the content of a future contingent proposition if we should hold with de Rivo that, in future contingent propositions, no truths are to be known; none are to be affirmed). The absence of truth, on the one hand however, does suggest the possible presence of falsehood although this type of contradiction or opposition between truth and falsehood does not exist if we are dealing with a situation which respectively precludes determinations of truth and falsehood and any acts of judgment that could come to these disjunction kind of determinations. In this context, the absence of truth does not point to the necessity of falsehood as its polar contrary or its polar opposite. If a species of proposition can never be true in any instances of the same, the same type of proposition can never be false. A bivalent either/or situation is not to be admitted which would have us say that a given thesis is either true or false or, in other words, alternatively, that  $p$  is true or not- $p$  is true.<sup>139</sup>

In the first three censures that are given in *Ad Christi vicarii*, the truth of future contingent propositions is indirectly affirmed (since a position which refers to a denial of truth is rejected and condemned) and so, as a consequence of this, from the truths that are acknowledged and which are known with respect to future contingent propositions, it is necessarily the case that the fulfillment of these propositions will be given. Once the truth of something is established, certain things follow as a consequence (by way of a species of necessity which would exist for us as an instance of contingent necessity or as an instance of conditional necessity). On one side of the equation, in a prior kind of manner, the truth of predictive statements is re-affirmed. However, as we attend to the last two censures, in the wording of these propositions, we find that the freedom or the contingency of future contingent events is also affirmed. It is acknowledged and, as re-affirmed, we would say that it is defended, guarded, or, in other words, its is assured. The Church's magisterial judgment rejects as follows from the alleged teaching of Peter de Rivo: (1) "For a proposition about the future to be true, it is not enough that what it says should be the case: it must be unpreventably the case. (2) We must say one of two things: either there is no present and actual truth in the articles of faith about the future, or what they say is something which not even divine power could prevent."<sup>140</sup> In other words, allegedly according to Peter de Rivo, if we should try

---

139Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle\\_of\\_bivalence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle_of_bivalence) (accessed May 24, 2015).

140Cf. <https://books.google.com/books?id=uycHWLae0Q8C&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=Peter+de+Rivo+Anthony+Kenny&source=bl&ots=5NHx6MFDeN&sig=b3KzNejnEhsRvmbAwxSpiDfjiMQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=N6xkVb6YD4XesAWh4CAAQ&ved=0CCgQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Peter%20de%20Rivo%20Anthony>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=uycHWLae0Q8C&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=Peter+de+Rivo+Anthony+Kenny&source=bl&ots=5NHx6MFDeN&sig=b3KzNejnEhsRvmbAwxSpiDfjiMQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=N6xkVb6YD4XesAWh4CAAQ&ved=0CCgQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Peter%20de%20Rivo%20Anthony>

and speak about the truth of a future contingent proposition, we should conclude (we must conclude) that the fulfilling event would be bereft of any real contingency that should properly belong to it. The necessity of a fulfilling event would be such that, in approximately the kind of language which de Rivo was using, nothing could possibly hinder its occurrence. The occurrence would be unpreventable although, as unpreventable or unstoppable, it would be impossible for us to speak about future events in a way which would acknowledge that they are endowed with a contingency that is endemic and which properly belongs to them. In contingency, things can turn out in some other kind of way. However, if, in this context, we refer to necessity and not to the presence of contingency, the determinacy of future events is something which simply reflects the first kind of determinacy which is given to us and which already exists for us if we should attend to the truthfulness of anything which exists as a predictive future proposition and if we should believe in the truthfulness of anything which exists as a predictive future proposition.

In conclusion thus, as we think about the teaching (the judgments) of Pope Sixtus IV, we find that our natural human reason is given a task or a problem that somehow needs to be resolved if we are to transcend the kind of contradiction which exists when, on the one hand, we acknowledge the presence of necessity and, on the other hand, the presence of contingency when we think about the nature of future contingent propositions. The Church's teaching (the Church's judgment) acts as a kind of stimulus for us in our quest for a possible increase in understanding (encouraging future acts of understanding) if, now, we need to move into a form of inquiry which can determine how necessity and contingency can be positively related to each other and how, in fact, they are positively related to each other. The point of departure in the Church's teaching is a questionable thesis or a counter-position which threatens certain aspects of the Church's faith (the truth of the Church's faith). If, in a humble way, we can say, for instance, that "I am going to London tomorrow" or "I will be going to London tomorrow," I would be uttering a contingent future proposition that is only verified in its reality or in its truth if, in fact, I do go to London the following day. "The proof is in the pudding" or, in other words, "I will believe it when I see it." The truth of a prediction is not really known in all its fullness or determination until its verification is given at a later, future date. No one would dispute our thesis here and the data that are taken and drawn from the deposit of our common experience. A proposition predicting a future event can be true in the present (at the time when it is uttered and known by us in this way) but its truth is only known for what it is fully as a truth through a form of verification that must be postponed until the desired or apt future event, in fact, occurs. In this context, we can then speak about a contingency which exists on both sides of the equation. If I say that "I will go to London tomorrow," I am referring to a decision which is contingent and to an action which is also contingent. And, if, in fact, I do go to London tomorrow, the event of its fulfillment is itself also contingent. A contingency within the cognitive order of things is matched by a contingency which exists within the ontological order of things (a contingency within the order of our human knowing and a contingency within the order of being that is known by us through our acts of human cognition).

However, what do we do when we encounter future contingent propositions that refer to a point of origin which exists outside of time? The point of origin is divine and human beings would exist as secondary causes. Our context here is a causality which emphasizes the greater power or the greater authority which belongs to the primary causality of God. A traditional metaphor or traditional example

---

[%20Kenny&f=false](#) (accessed May 26, 2015), citing Sir Anthony Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, p. 186. Kenny's translation differs from that which is offered in *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 234, #722-723.

speaks about the kind of relation which exists between the hammer and the chisel of an artist and the work (the activity) of an artist, wielding hammer and chisel. The hammer and chisel exercise a form of secondary causality. However, the causality of the artist is a far greater thing than the causality of the tools. Far more is accomplished by the artist than is accomplished by the use of his tools. What is accomplished by the artist far transcends anything which is accomplished by the tools and, at the same time too, the artist works through his tools. Hence, if we should turn to the secondary causes which exist within our world and to ourselves who would exist as secondary causes within this world and if we should also turn to the primary causality of God, we can begin to overcome the tension which exists between the truth claim of a prediction (its truth as a truth implies a conditional form of necessity that would be subsequent) and the contingency of its possible fulfillment if we can begin to think about how it is possible for God to work with causes where some are necessary and some are contingent. In other words, can we conceive of a situation where God can work inexorably to achieve ends, purposes, and goals that only he understands and knows through causes that, at times, fail (causes that frequently fail)? Can we conceive of an order of government or a depth of understanding that is so profound (so far greater than our own) that, by means of causes that fail, through causes that exist in an utterly contingent way (as secondary causes), God is able to achieve purposes or ends that cannot be achieved through any other kind of way? In other words, the more sophisticated and convoluted the form of agency, the more delicate, the more incredible, and the more wonderful are the results which follow thereof.

My point here is to advert to a possible truth which perhaps has not been realized in the minds of many: in understanding the human order of things, if certain things are to be adequately understood, if some kind of satisfactory understanding is to be reached about some human situations (an understanding that quietens our souls and minds *to a certain extent*), then, in some situations, we must move (we should move) through the ups and downs of our understanding (through the dialectic and convolutions of our understanding) from the natural kind of understanding that knows about the being of contingent, created things toward the kind of understanding which works with analogical acts of understanding and which attempts to know about the kind of being which belongs to the existence of supernatural realities (spiritual realities which exist but which are not conditioned by circumstances of time and place; spiritual realities which exist in an absolute kind of way).<sup>141</sup> Hence: when the Church makes certain judgments about our natural human reason (its scope and depth), while some of these judgments point

---

<sup>141</sup>See Alain Besançon, *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2007), pp. 53-69, where the author argues that, for purposes of moving toward a greater understanding of human affairs, if certain things are to be more adequately understood, we should admit that we can be helped by shifting into a form of inquiry which asks theological questions. A theological understanding of things can supplement or add to that which we already know if our initial or first point of departure is that which we already understand and know if, for instance, we attend to the science and the learning of human psychology or other possible sources of meaning that can be given to us if we should attend to the use of other disciplines. Nothing is lost from what can be given to us through the various natural and human sciences. However, much can be gained if we should advert to theological forms of inquiry and possible experiences of theological understanding which can reveal shades and depths of meaning that would not be known in any other kind of way. The mysteriousness of our human world, the mysteriousness of our human condition, can elicit a form of inquisitive willingness that would want to move toward an explanation of things which would want to be more radical and, in this experience of understanding, more adequate and satisfactory.

to the scope and the depth of our reasoning ability (affirming the value and goodness of this species of reasoning and knowing), other judgments also point to limitations that plague our understanding: indicating what it can properly do and what it cannot properly do. And so, within this larger cognitive context, as we move from one set of negative judgments which points to the legitimate scope of our human reason toward another set of negative judgments which then points to the limitations of our human reason, when we think about the censures of Pope Sixtus IV and how they pertain to the role and place of future contingent propositions, we should find (we should conclude) that some truths and values are only known and preserved or, in other words, they are best kept, if we can move into an order of thinking and reasoning which works from some kind of higher viewpoint: from a perspective which transcends conditions that are entirely constituted by variables which refer to varying determinations of space and time. To understand the being of some created contingent things, we need to work at times from an order of being that is entirely lacking in any kind of contingency (the kind of contingency that we know about and which we experience when we advert to the world of our ordinary experience and how everything exists as a union of matter and form, intelligible components existing within material components as these are given to us through our various acts of sense). Put bluntly and as a species of suggestion which alludes to a critical form of self-discovery which knows about the limitations of our natural human cognition and which also knows that, through our acts of natural human reasoning, we want to move toward an understanding of things that cannot be given to us through our contingent acts of human reason:

Can a people, a civilization, recover from...[cyclic...cumulative] decline? To my mind the only solution is religious. What will sweep away the rationalizations? More reasoning will hardly do it effectively, for it will be suspected of being just so much more rationalizing. And when reasoning is ineffective, what is left but faith? What will smash the determinisms - economic, social, cultural, psychological - that egoism has constructed and exploited? What can be offered but the hoping beyond hope that religion inspires? When finally the human situation seethes with alienation, bitterness, resentment, recrimination, hatred, mounting violence, what can retributive justice bring about but a duplication of the evils that already exist? Then what is needed is not retributive justice but self-sacrificing love.<sup>142</sup>

### **On the Impossibility or the Possibility of Integrity in the Conduct of our Human Cognition**

As we move from the pontificate of Pope Sixtus IV to the pontificate of Pope Leo X, a third instance or a third set of negative judgments greets us when we attend to three negative judgments which come to us from the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) and a papal bull which was issued on December 19, 1513 by the Pope within the context of this ecumenical Council: its title, *Apostolici Regiminis*. As a kind of foreword, in words which serve to introduce the rulings or the point of these three negative judgments, it is noted initially that a group of “extremely pernicious errors”<sup>143</sup> (among other errors) are

---

<sup>142</sup>Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S. J. (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 158.

<sup>143</sup>Eric A. Constant, “A Reinterpretation of the Fifth Lateran Council Decree *Apostolici Regiminis*,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. XXXIII/2 (2002): 360. See also the same text which is located at <https://www.msu.edu/~constan8/FifthLat.pdf> (accessed August 29, 2015).



currently being taught by “some people, rash in their philosophizing”<sup>144</sup> or, through an alternative translation, by “some, playing the philosopher without due care,”<sup>145</sup> although these same errors have “always [been] rejected by the faithful” [*errores a fidelibus semper explosos*]<sup>146</sup> within the life of the Church and that to teach the truth of these errors is to engage in a form of philosophical inquiry and speculation which wrongly attempts to argue for the truth of three theses that the Church's teaching has always rejected: summarizing them, (1) the mortality of the intellectual soul in man; (2) the oneness of this soul in all men; and (3) a teaching which claims that these theses are “true at least according to philosophy [even if, on the other hand, these same propositions are not true within the context of Catholic religious belief and the work which properly to the work and praxis of theology].”<sup>147</sup> Some persons have been behaving badly in their thinking and teaching although no names are given. It is

---

144Fifth Lateran General Council, *Apostolici regiminis*, as cited by Dupuis, p. 167, #410.

145Constant, p. 360.

146Pope Leo X, Lateran Council V, “The Human Soul,” *Sources*, p. 237, #738; Constant, p. 362. The reference to “errors” that “have always [been] rejected by the faithful” in this context seems, most appropriately, to refer to how, in the past, in the work of Catholic theology, some theologians (with at least the implicit approval and blessing of the Church's Magisterium) have always engaged in discussions that have argued against the reasonableness or the truth of certain teachings that no Catholic can truly hold and, at the same time, adhere to the truth of Catholic teachings on the degree of personal culpability which we all have as human beings with respect to our sins and the offenses against God which we all commit. It is said, for instance, about Origen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Augustine that they all engaged in philosophical arguments in proof of the immortality of our human souls or, in other words, the special kind of self-transcendence which belongs to our individual human souls. Cf. Ott, p. 98. See especially St. Augustine's *De immortalitate animae*. Cf. Constant, p. 363. With respect to the oneness of the human rational soul as these souls exist among individual human beings, Aquinas's treatise *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists* had argued against a point of view which had detracted from the truth of believing that, as individuals, we should all atone for any sins that we have personally committed. A story in point comes to us from the time of Aquinas's day (from William of Tocco, a contemporary of Aquinas and one of his biographers). A soldier who had been then living in Paris was refusing, for philosophical reasons, “to atone for his sins because, as he had put it: ‘If the soul of the blessed Peter is saved, I shall also be saved; for if we know by one [higher, suprahuman] intellect, we shall share the same destiny.’” The soul which we each have as human beings does not belong to us as human beings since it exists as a greater thing. It is something that we all participate in. Cf. Beatrice H. Zedler, “Preface,” Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968), citing William of Tocco.

However, in conjunction with earlier theological teaching and the arguments which can be found within it, from the viewpoint of Pope Leo X and the 5<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council, it should also be noted that prior magisterial teaching can be adverted to (although of a kind which exists at a local level and which is thus not binding on the obedience of the universal church), its source being an episcopal decree that was issued on December 10, 1270 by Étienne (Stephen) Tempier, the then Bishop of Paris, when he condemned, as erroneous, a list of 13 philosophical theses. Hence, included within this list, at its head or as a first error, one errs in holding “that the intellect of all human beings is the same and one numerically” and one also errors if one holds “that the soul, which is the form of a man as a man, perishes with the body.” Cf. Frederick J. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume II Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 441; Bartosz Brożek, “Medieval Theories of Double

being said that some teachings are true within the order and practice of philosophy although these same truths are not to be regarded as true within the province of theology. Hence, for all practical purposes, an errant theory of double truth is being espoused as something which should be regarded as licit and proper or, in other words, a doctrine of double truth which affirms that a truth in theology is not to be regarded as a truth within philosophy. Truths can exist within two distinct, separate domains and the absence of agreement should not be seen as a problem or a difficulty which should not exist and which, therefore, needs to be overcome in some way. Because the order of teaching within *Apostolici Regimini* moves from earlier magisterial teaching about how the intellectual soul of human beings exists “essentially” or, by its very nature, as “the form of the human body,” and then, from there, it is said that the rational human soul is immortal, we begin with the initial teaching about how the human soul exists as the form of every human body (the implications of this teaching with respect to the individuality of the rational human soul) and we then move toward what is taught about the immortality of the human soul and the unacceptability of a point of view or a teaching which would attempt to argue that contradictions are to be tolerated or accepted by us when or if, through our inquiry and understanding, we should move from the kind of apprehensions which exist within the kind of knowledge which exists within philosophy (and science) toward the kind of apprehensions which exist within the order of theology.

### **Soul as Personal and Individual**

First, with respect to the alleged oneness of the human soul (signified, in its technical designation, as the theory of “monopsychism”: “the belief that all humans share one and the same eternal consciousness, soul, mind or intellect”),<sup>148</sup> in the inception of a new departure that is not content with a judgment which points to a negative affirmation of truth, the Church's Magisterium implicitly argues or it attempts to argue that the human intellectual soul is not one in all men (not one among all human beings) “since it [the rational soul] is not only truly in itself and essentially the form of the human body

---

Truth,” [https://www.academia.edu/344483/Medieval\\_Theories\\_of\\_Double\\_Truth](https://www.academia.edu/344483/Medieval_Theories_of_Double_Truth) (accessed October 10, 2015). The listing of these philosophical errors is not divided into categories or groups that would cluster around each other although it can be argued (and it has been argued) that, if we should believe in the oneness of the human soul (if we should wrongly believe that the rational human soul does not exist in an individual way, as distributed among human beings), then, from this, it would follow and we can errantly conclude that hence: (1) “it is false or improper that man perceives,” (2) “the soul, which is the form of a man as a man, perishes with the body,” (3) “the soul separated after death from the body does not suffer from corporeal fire,” and (4) “God cannot make immortal or incorruptible things that are mortal and or corruptible.” Cf. Brożek. The first error which Tempier cites and condemns explains why he should also condemn the other errors that he gives and which are listed as numbers 2, 7, 8, and 13.

147Pope Leo X, Lateran Council V, “The Human Soul,” *Sources*, p. 237, #738. Citing the wording of the negative judgment that is given to us in the magisterial affirmations of Pope Leo X in *Apostolici Regimini*: “with the approval of the sacred council, we condemn and reject all those who insist that the intellectual soul is mortal, or that it is one among all human beings, and those who suggest doubts on this topic.” Cf. Constant, p. 361. An alternative (less literal) translation reads that “we condemn and reprove all who maintain that the rational soul is mortal or one unique reality (shared) in (by) every man.” Cf. Ott, p. 98.

148Cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopsychism> (accessed September 21, 2015).

[as the Church has already taught]<sup>149</sup>...but it is also multiple according to the multitude of bodies into which it is infused, multiplied, and to be multiplied.”<sup>150</sup> The multiplicity of our bodies (which no one questions) points to a similar multiplicity which should exist with respect to the number of our rational souls since, as an inference that can be legitimately drawn from the teaching of the Council of Vienne, the truth of a negative teaching on the wrongness of holding that “the rational and intellectual soul is not of itself and essentially the form of the human body” points to the truth of a positive teaching which would affirm the opposite: the “rational and intellectual soul” is, in fact, “truly itself and essentially the form of the human body.” Alternatively, in other words, by another translation, it is said that the soul is “really, of itself, and essentially, the form of the body.”<sup>151</sup> Hence, each of our bodies is informed by an individual rational soul which properly belongs to it and which is fully united to it. Just as my human

---

149Please note, as a point of clarification here, that I have introduced an interpolation as a way of indirectly referring to a claim that is explicitly made within the articulation of this judgment to the effect that the intellectual human soul is “truly in itself and essentially the form of the human body” because, according to the teaching of Pope Lex X, this teaching “was defined in the canon of Pope Clement V our predecessor of happy memory published in the (general) Council of Vienne.” However, if we attend to the wording of the canon which is being referred to within this context (a canon that was issued during the pontificate of Pope Clement V), as we have already previously noted, a negative judgment was, in fact, given in 1311-1312, and not a positive judgment which would have directly said that the human rational intellectual soul is the form of the human body. To move from the text and the meaning of a negative affirmation to the text and the meaning of a positive affirmation within this doctrinal context accordingly points to two realities which should be adverted to, noticed, and acknowledged: (1) a species of intelligible connection joins these judgments with each other and (2) a species of intelligible connection joins the earlier teaching of the Church's Magisterium with the later teaching of the Church's Magisterium.

On the identity then of these two distinct realities, philosophically, the first reality refers to a rule of logic which exists as an indemonstrable fundamental “law of thought” (sometimes known as an indemonstrable law of the human mind or an indemonstrable principle of reason). According to the principle or the Law of the Excluded Middle (previously mentioned), with respect to any proposition that allegedly states a matter of fact (this is so or this is not so), either the proposition in question is true or its negation is true. Cf. Joseph, p. 13. If we should have two contradictory propositions that exclude each other (where one proposition is the negation or the denial of the other), one must be true and the other must be false. Cf. Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, c. 9. Hence, by applying this law of the mind to a question which asks about the status of the intellectual rational human soul (how this soul sits in relation to that which exists as the human body), then, from the known falsity of a claim which says that the intellectual rational human soul is not the form of the human body, we can truthfully claim that the opposite is to be admitted. The intellectual rational human soul exists as the form of the human body.

To understand however why we are compelled to move to this type of conclusion or, in other words, to understand the reasonableness and the inevitability of this deductive shift, we can simply note that an intimate, mutual, and indemonstrable relation exists between that which exists as the fundamental laws of our human minds (its cognitional laws) and that which exists as the fundamental laws of being or reality (we refer to its metaphysical laws). Every attempt, for instance, to prove the truth of the principle of the excluded middle, similarly too every attempt to prove the truth of the principle of identity, and also every attempt to prove the truth of the principle of contradiction - all

body exists apart from your human body (the bodies differ from each other), my human body does not exist apart from its soul and your human body does not exist apart from its soul. On the basis of this difference thus, if your human body is not my human body, *a fortiori*, your human soul is not my human soul. Your rational soul or your human mind is endowed with an individuality which is peculiar to it. It differs from the individuality of my rational soul or the individuality of my human mind even if, admittedly, we can argue and hold that both your human mind and my human mind are to be regarded as specifications of the same kind of soul which properly belongs to us as human beings (souls which exist as rational human souls that are joined to materially existing human bodies). If, on the one hand thus, our bodies exist as human bodies (if, as human beings, we all have the same type of body, if they are constituted by the same set of ingredients, by the same arrangement of material

---

these attempts when taken together (when in a condition of act), all must end up supposing the truth or the validity of these same laws or principles that we are trying to prove and claim. Whenever, normally, we engage in any kind of demonstration, we always try to move from that which is more certain or from that which is apodictically certain (or from that which is simply given to us and which is unquestionable) toward that which must be proved and shown to be true (certain and real) through a form of reasoning and inference that moves from A to B without falling into any kind of contradiction. However, on the other hand, when we work with principles which are so basic that they cannot be proved through any kind of demonstration that would want to work from some kind of third standpoint (an externally existing, independent standpoint), we will find that a necessity which exists within our thinking points to a like necessity which exists within the order of that which can be known by us through our various acts of human thinking and reasoning and any subsequent acts which belong to the gamut and the order of our human cognition. A necessity which exists within the order of our thinking and reasoning (a necessity which can be grasped by us within the order of our human reasoning through a self-reflective form of inquiry) reflects or immediately points to a like necessity which must also exist within the order of real things or the order of real beings that is known by us through our acts of cognition: how or why “x” is related to “y” or the fact that “x” is related to “y” in a way that no one can doubt.

To understand these differences more fully (more personally) however, we best attend to personal experiences that can be given to us within the genesis of our self-understanding. We can try, in each our own way, to construct arguments on behalf of the fundamental principles of our human reason (the laws of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle). We can try to prove their validity, their truth, and the certitude of their validity and truth and if, as we do this, we encounter a species of closed circle that points to the form or the shape of our analysis; if, in moving toward our desired intended conclusions, we are continually returning to our initial points of departure, then, within this context, we should discover how basic or how fundamental are our laws of the mind which, by way of a real distinction, we cannot distinguish from that which exists as the fundamental laws of being or reality although, if we should speak about the aptness or the relevance of some kind of distinction, we can speak (we should speak) about a conceptual or a mental kind of distinction which exists because of how, through our reasoning and understanding, we engage in suppositions and we form hypotheses that, perhaps, will help us in the kind of understanding that we are seeking to acquire as we try to move from a lack of understanding to a clarity that points to an experience of understanding. With our minds, we distinguish between that which exists as the order of knowing and the order of being and, with our minds and through we understanding (although in a different way), we know about an identity which exists between the kind of order which exists within our human cognition and that which is grasped and known by us within the order of our human cognition.

elements or parts), then, it should not be a matter of surprise to us if we should then conclude that we all share in the same kind of mind which, generically, we all have as human beings. Material differences that distinguish bodies from one another (material differences revealing a multiplicity of bodies) point to intellectual differences which should distinguish the mind of a given individual from the mind of some other given individual. The individuality of our minds in turn points to the responsibility which we each have about how we should use our minds, taking care to use our minds in good ways and not in ways that could impair the kind of good that our minds are supposed to achieve (given the kind of nature or the kind of intelligibility that is definitive of the type of understanding which belongs to us as human beings by and through the life of our individual human minds, a kind of nature which points to a form of self-transcendence that is endemic to exercises of human cognition in

---

Theologically, the second reality which exists exists as a religious reality because it refers to a species of ecclesiastical teaching authority which precedes or which is, in fact, presupposed by the kind of teaching authority which also exists when, at times, in emergency situations, popes and councils decide that they should propose or define a teaching that should be given in response to the emergence of new questions and objections which are currently undermining the truth of the Church's faith and unsettling the life of Catholics in the profession and practice of their faith. As we should all know, doctrinal determinations, as these are defined and when they occur, always emerge from within a given set of concrete conditions. They come to us from either the solemn pronouncements of individual popes or the solemn pronouncements of general councils (of a Pope in council with the Church's bishops). Compare the phraseology of "Pope-in-Council" with that of Queen-in-Parliament in the context of English constitutional law and think about the degrees of difference which exist. In other words, prior to extraordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium in the exercise of its proper teaching authority, ordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium must be supposed and distinguished (first come the ordinary acts and then, the extraordinary acts) since, long before there should be any need to convoke a general council or to turn to a Pope for a special ruling or a decision from him about a matter that pertains to faith and morals, there exists an informal common ordinary universal form of teaching authority that is exercised on a day to day basis throughout the life of the Church by all the Church's bishops, united in communion with the Roman Pontiff (who is cited by the Union Council of Florence in 1439 as the "father and teacher of all Christians"). Cf. Pope Eugenius IV, "Laetentur coeli" (issued July 6, 1439), *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 219, #691. For an explanation about the nature of this ordinary universal teaching authority, see Giovanni B. Sala SJ, "Fallible Teachings and the Assistance of the Holy Spirit. Reflections on the Ordinary Magisterium in Connection with the Instruction on „The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," <http://lonergan.org/wp-content/2010/03/InfallibleChurch.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2015). If, in some way thus, the charism of infallibility is invoked when the Church's Magisterium acts in an extraordinary manner, this infallibility is also already present (it is already operative) before it is explicitly invoked by extraordinary exercises of the Church's Magisterium. It is always implied or it is presupposed whenever, together, when in communion with each other, Popes and bishops reiterate or, in some way, they repeat teachings on a daily basis that all are to believe and hold as Catholics and which all should normally believe and hold since, as yet, no movements or trends are presenting themselves to suggest that some teachings should be questioned and disputed and that some teachings should be rejected or altered in some way for the sake of other teachings that allegedly merit a greater degree of acceptance.

Hence, as we attend to the workings of the Church's ordinary form of teaching authority and as we apply this form of teaching to truths of fact and reason that directly pertain to matters of faith and

the manner of the activity and the reception which properly belongs to it).<sup>152</sup>

However, or on the other hand, if we should choose to work with another way of speaking in order to move toward an explanation that can touch on why the Fifth Lateran Council would teach that “the rational soul” is not “one unique reality [that is] (shared) in (by) every man,”<sup>153</sup> we can begin by noting that the commonness which exists in terms of species or type of rational soul does not necessarily translate into the commonness which would allege that, as human beings, we all share in the existence or the being of only one rational soul (the existence or the being of only one mind or intellect) that allegedly, in some way, we all share in and which we participate in as individuals and which, *qua* soul, would exist as a fundamental principle of determination, distinguishing between the kind of existence

---

morals (the truth of the “Good News” which the Church proclaims and teaches), we can understand why certain beliefs and why certain assumptions are believed or held to be true long before any judgments are rendered about what exactly is the reality or the truth of a given belief. In this case, with respect to the sum of negative and positive judgments which exist about the status or the condition of the intellectual rational human soul as the form of the human body, belief in the truth of the Church's teaching about the intellectual rational human soul has already existed for some time although in a manner which works with implicit forms of belief or with a manner of expression that is not lacking in degrees of inactness since technical specifications of meaning have not yet been crafted and defined in a precise manner even if, truly, we can always argue that a positive relation must always exist between these two different kinds of meaning and the different forms of expression that would accompany these two different forms of meaning.

With respect to the individuality of human souls, for evidence of earlier forms of teaching and the manner of language which was then used, see, for instance, in the Old Testament, Genesis 2, 7 and Ezekiel 37, 1-14. The words of Genesis 2, 7 introduce a scriptural point of departure for how we should speak about a kind of indwelling that is done by the soul as a life force, the soul as *psyche* (ψυχή), and which is to be viewed as a principle of vitality, signifying the “vitality of the flesh.” Hence, in Genesis 2, 7: “...the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [*spiraculum vitae*, translated as “life principle” or “soul”]; and man became a living soul.” Cf. Ott, p. 97; <http://biblehub.com/genesis/2-7.htm> (accessed June 30, 2015); Elmar Klinger, “Soul,” *Encyclopedia of Theology The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 1616. At the time of his creation, man becomes a soul and when he dies, he becomes a “dead” soul (Numbers 23:10). Our human souls come directly from God, this soul for this person and this soul for this other person. Cf. Klinger, p. 1616. Later on then, when we move into New Testament times and after the death of the first apostles, within the corporate life of the Church, words and teachings abound which point to how the human body and the human soul exist together in a way (in a unity) which is peculiar to the form of our human existence. In the credal formulations of the *Quicumque* [the Creed of St. Athanasius], an inherent unity or an intrinsic union is suggested between the human body and the human soul. In words that come to us from this creed: “...as the rational soul and body are one man, so God and man are one Christ.” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 16, #40. Amongst the Church Fathers, St. Augustine, in the *City of God*, teaches us that “from the soul the body has feeling and life.” Cf. Ott, p. 97. And later on, in the context of his own day and time, in his *De fide orthodoxa* [An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith] 2, 12, St. John Damascene teaches about how we should understand the human condition as we attend to the creation accounts that we can find within Genesis about how, as human beings, we have been created by God:

which belongs to us as human beings in contrast with other kinds of existence which would belong to every other kind of living thing. As a general principle: that which exists as a rational human soul determines that which exists as a human body (why this collection or this assembly of bones and flesh is a human body) and, at the same time too, the rational human soul also specifies a number of activities which are related to the life of the human body or which are properly associated with the being and the life of our bodies: whether, in some instances, requiring the use of our human bodies if certain ends or objectives are to be achieved or whether, in other instances and circumstances, eliciting the activity or the use of our human bodies if other kinds of ends are to be achieved by us as human beings.

By way of further explanation as regards the point that we are making: soul as soul (or the rational human soul as the rational human soul) functions as the principle or the proximate source of our human determinations. It specifies or it determines different patterns of movement that are distinctive of who we are as human beings (characterizing the quality, the goodness, or the perfection of our human behavior in a way which differs and which, at times, would oppose the quality or the characteristic type

---

Now this being the case, He creates with His own hands man of a visible nature and an invisible, after His own image and likeness: on the one hand man's body He formed of earth, and on the other his reasoning and thinking soul He bestowed upon him by His own inbreathing, and this is what we mean by "*after His image.*" For the phrase "*after His image*" clearly to the side of his nature which consists of mind and free will, whereas "*after His likeness*" means likeness in virtue so far as that is possible.

Further, body and soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposes.

By attending then to the kind of teaching which comes to us from the ordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium, we can understand why, in the extraordinary acts of the Church's Magisterium, some kind of development is to be postulated (some kind of development is to be admitted) although, at the same time too, we can also understand why these same developments are grounded in the preceding ongoing life of the Church and why, in a way, they are limited (they are determined) by a species of inerrant teaching authority which belongs to the Church's Magisterium in the context of its ordinary, somewhat informal, universal exercise.

150Pope Leo X, Lateran Council V, "The Human Soul," *Sources*, pp. 237-238, #738. Please note that, for reasons of clarity in reading and understanding, I have amended the text of this cited translation by inserting, within square brackets, "the rational soul." The text of the original translation, within square brackets, more simply refers to "the soul."

151Cf. [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Encyclopedia\\_\(1913\)/Apostolici\\_Regiminis](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Apostolici_Regiminis) (accessed August 29, 2015), citing Hefele-Knöpfler, "Conciliengeschichte", VI, 536-542; Denzinger-Stahl, "Enchiridion Symb. et Definit.", 9th ed. (Freiburg, 1899) 136-137.

152See the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes*, 15 which notes and teaches that, in the context of his self-understanding, "man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe."

153Ott, p. 98. I cite from Ott's translation of the judgment that is given in *Apostolici Regiminis* even if it comes across to us as a translation that appears to be less literal than other translations.

of behavior which would belong to the being of other life forms). If the human mind, in its being, cannot exist with a fullness of reality which properly belongs to it apart from its union with a human body, as we have noted elsewhere, the life of our minds cannot accordingly exist apart from the life of our bodies. Intellectual, rational operations (which are specified by a proximate, imminent principle which refers to the indwelling of an intellectual rational soul which exists within a human body) can only exist with the fullness which proper belongs to them if they can work with operations which are more closely associated with the life of the body than that which would exist *per se* as the life of the soul (the soul as the human rational soul). Intellectual, rational operations are *directly explained* if we can refer to an immaterial principle of some kind which would exist for us as a species of intellectual, rational soul (this species of rational soul rather than some other species of rational soul; the rational soul of an angel is, for instance, not the rational soul of a human being) although these same operations can be *indirectly explained* if we can refer to another species of immaterial principle which refers to the sensible human soul and any operations which would exist as individual acts of human sensing. Individual acts of human sensing differ from acts of sensing which belong to other life forms precisely because, in our acts of human sensing, an orientation or an ordering is to be adverted to: a finality or a teleology which notices that our human acts of sensing tend to exist for the sake of intellectual operations which can possibly emerge for us as human beings (existing as human subjects) within the context of our concrete human living. These things being said thus, if we cannot refer to the nature of the rational human soul, we will not understand the nature of the sensible human soul and how this type of soul (how this type of sensitivity) exists with the sensitivity which properly belongs to it because it is directed or related or because it is oriented toward the kind of activity which is understood by us or which is determined for us if we should refer to the nature or the intelligibility of our rational human souls.

Hence, because, in our human lives, our bodies are joined to a soul which exists as a rational intellectual soul, the acts which are more closely related to the life of our bodies than to the life of our souls are acts which exist in a distinctively human way because, in some way or, in other words, indirectly, they are all ordered to acts and activities that are more closely related to the life of our souls than to the life of our bodies. Our acts of sense exist inevitably or ultimately for the sake of our acts of understanding although, at the same time too, it is to be admitted that our acts of sensing enjoy a form of realization or a species of satisfaction which points to a causality that is endemic to our acts of sense *as acts of sense*. The realizations which belongs to our acts of sense are not to be equated with realizations which belong to our different acts of human understanding. On the one hand, our intellectual rational human souls determine the kind of activity which properly belongs to us in our differing acts of human sensing although, at the same time too, the manner of governance is not always clear, simple, or direct. Our acts of sensing possess a life and being of their own: a causality of their own. Orientations exist within our acts of sensing which are not always directed toward the possible enjoyment of later acts of understanding. While our acts of human sensing are ordered to possible acts of human inquiring which, in turn, are ordered or which can lead us toward possible acts of understanding, the kind of governance which exists within this ordering of causes is less direct than the direct kind of governance or the direct kind of determination which would exist for us if our focus or our point of reference is solely the being and the rationality of the human soul, the rationality of this soul as distinct or as apart from the existence of every other kind of rationality.

In general thus, all together, the ordering of our different acts of human sensing to our different acts of human understanding and the ordering of our different acts of understanding to our different acts of human sensing best explains why each of us possesses a rational soul that is unique to ourselves as



human subjects. A uniquely existing body is joined to a uniquely existing soul. If we were to assume or think that the rational human soul is something which exists in a manner which is somehow apart, separate, and distinct from the being and the life which we have as human beings (existing as human individuals), we would not have a principle of explanation which could then account for the distinctive, unusual, or the particular kind of ordering which always exists for us when we move from one individual human person to another individual human person and as we move from the kind of ordering which exists within the life of a given person to a similar but a unique kind of ordering which also exists within the life of another human being.

To understand the background of a way of thinking in philosophy which would want to argue that the human mind or the human intellect should be conceived to exist if it were a separately existing thing (a “subsistent immaterial thinking thing”) or as “a substance that is separate and distinct from man, and one for all men” and so not truly existing as a power or as a capacity which is distributed among different human beings, belonging to the being and the life of each of us in our individual human souls, an understanding of this context introduces a reader to the arguments that we can find in Aquina's treatise, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*.<sup>154</sup> Within this context, the kind of soul that would be united to a human body would be other than that which could exist as an intellectual, rational soul which would properly belong to any given individual (as in the existence of my rational soul versus the existence of your rational soul). In this other species of intellectual rational soul, it would exist at some kind of higher level. It would exist as a transcendent center of cognitive activity or, more radically, as we find this for instance within the philosophy of Averroes, it would exist or it could exist in a way which could conceivably include the two kinds of intellectual activity which we commonly experience within ourselves when we attend to our human experience of self engaged in acts of cognition: (1) that which the mind does and achieves proactively as a species of efficient cause or as a species of mover and (2) that which it would simply receive as some kind of reception or gift that is given to it from some kind of external source. Actions differ from passions or, in other words, actions, from acts and, at the same time, both intertwine in a way which points to a familiar species of mutual causality or a familiar species of mutual priority that is invoked if we should try to explain how these activities and acts are all related and ordained to each other where one kind of act leads to another kind of act in circuits that point to recurrent patterns of activity that would seem to exist in a self-generating, self-perpetuating kind of way.

Turning here especially to the Islamic philosophies of mind which we find in Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (1126-1198), the intellectual rational soul that human beings relate to and which they participate in is said to be formed and constituted by variables which in turn suggest that this soul is to be identified with the uncreated soul or the uncreated spirit of God, the intellectual rational soul or the immaterial rational spirit of God being none other than God as He exists in Himself (God as a pure act of understanding or God as an unrestricted act of understanding and knowing where here, in this unique kind of understanding and knowing, no potencies of any kind are to be alluded to since nothing in God needs to undergo any kind of development, change,

---

<sup>154</sup>See Beatrice H. Zedler's “Introduction,” to Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968), pp. 1-19.

subtraction, or addition). With respect to the chain of reasoning which exists with respect to this philosophy of mind, hazarding the kind of thinking which leads to the conclusions which are drawn: the simplicity or the purity of understanding, as we commonly and paradoxically experience it, points toward the necessity or the obviousness of its absoluteness: its unique absoluteness or, in other words, the reasonableness or the cogency of this absoluteness. If both souls - that which belongs to God and that which belongs to human beings - if both souls exist as "subsistent immaterial thinking things," if both souls exist in a manner that is not conditioned by considerations of time and space, it would seem then that, between them, only a conceptual distinction is to be adverted to. On the one hand, in God *as God*, no real distinction exists between God's active intellect and God's passive intellect since, in God, no potency exists. No potency; hence, no passive intellect. Everything in God exists within a condition of act (act as pure act, act as fully realized). But, similarly, with respect to ourselves as human beings, according to Averroes, both the active intellect and the possible intellect in some way exist together. They share the same nature to the degree that each exists allegedly as "a simple, impassible substance" (even if we should try to distinguish between the active and passive intellect by saying, with Averroes, that the passive intellect exists in a "material" way compared with how the active intellect exists in an "immaterial" manner).<sup>155</sup> However, when we attend to the kind of severance or the kind of separation which allegedly exists between the possible intellect, on the one hand, and any or all instances of matter on the other hand, we should find that, in Averroes, we are working with a notion of matter that is analogous (functionally analogous). A notion or concept of matter is being supposed or it exists within this context as a relativity that is being postulated because, now, it is needed if we are to distinguish between that which exists as the active intellect in man and that which exists as the passive intellect in man. As intellect, the passive intellect is something which exists in an immaterial way. But, in relation to active intellect, it exists in a material way. And so, *in a way*, as we think about it, this materiality can be confirmed if we should refer to our experience of self, engaging in our various acts of human cognition. The reference to materiality points to the potency that is endemic to us in the performance or the happening of our human cognition. Performatively, usually, we all ask questions. We seek to understand something precisely because something is not known or understood and we want to move from a condition of potency to a condition of act. However, if, with Averroes, we should refer to the materiality of our passive intellects, this materiality is not something which can be confirmed or known by us as a derivative that can come to us from our various acts and data of sense. It cannot be grounded in any data or datum which can be experienced and known by us if, through the mediation of a prospective act of judgment, we should turn toward possible acts of sense and attend to that which can be given to us through our various acts of sense. Hence, the absence of a reference to acts and data of sense (the absence of any kind of direct reference) points to a meaning for materiality which is not grounded in either a term which belongs to an act of sense or a term which belongs to an act of understanding, acts of understanding working from the givens to sense to detach from these givens an intellectual component which, in some way, exists within the givens of sense that are experienced. Bluntly put: on the one hand, matter is not being

---

155Zedler, p. 3.

experienced and, on the other hand, materiality is not being distinguished as a species of being which differs from other kinds of being that can be understood and known. A meaning is being suggested as the term of a way of speaking. A supposition or a difference is being put into words, but the wording of this difference points to a conception of matter that raises questions about the aptness of its usage.

The absence of real distinctions thus as, with Averroes, we attend to the mind of God and as we also attend to our minds as human beings, accordingly points to a set of conditions that are brought into being as both an inevitable and as an intelligible result: reasons and considerations which suggest that both kinds of understanding refer essentially to the same thing (the same species of thing). A divine kind of understanding is somehow always operative in us (and through us) as human beings although the manner of its operation is such that it detracts from how we can distinguish and point to a different kind of understanding which allegedly exists among ourselves as human beings when, as conscious human subjects, we try to attend to the nature of our own acts of understanding (our human acts of understanding). Human understanding is supposed to differ from divine understanding. Arguably, a differing understanding about the nature of the human mind exists within the thought of both Avicenna and Averroes (when we compare their philosophies of mind with each other) although, at the same time too, each works from a theology and a set of religious beliefs which strongly emphasizes (some say overemphasizes) the primary causality of God (the omnipotence and the freedom of this unique type of causality). This freedom and power is so great and so overwhelming that, when we attend to the place and role of secondary causes (the nature of secondary causes), we must assign to them a greater degree of passivity than that which could be the degree or the extent of their individual activity. An inverse relation is said to obtain between these two different orders of being. The activity and the power of God's causality is such that it always takes away from the activity or the power of secondary causes. God's causality works only by adding to the passivity of secondary causes. This causality cannot be understood in a way which can think about how it can possibly add to the activity or the power of secondary causes, facilitating the activity or the power of these secondary causes.

However, within this context, if the passivity of secondary causes is conceived to exist in a way which entirely overshadows the activity and the autonomy of these same causes, a context is created which jars with conceptions and suppositions which would want to think that, in some way, a more adequate explanation of things can possibly be attempted. A better explanation would encompass a wider range of different causes within a single point of view that is able to think about how these different causes all interact with each other in a way which leads to the effects or results which are constitutive of the kind of world that we happen to live in. Hence: if, obviously, the passivity of secondary causes points to the power of primary causality as this belongs to God alone in a simple relation of cause and effect, can we move toward an understanding of divine causality which is enhanced if our point of departure is not the passivity of secondary causes but, rather, the activity or the power of secondary causes? Is God's causality not, in fact, a far greater thing (a more powerful thing) precisely because it can work with causes which possess an autonomy or a freedom of their own: a freedom which allows them at times to behave in unpredictable ways, in ways that can

sometimes be defective? In this freedom, in the absence of necessity, in the absence of determination, is there not a connatural relation which exists between the kind of causality which belongs to God and the kind of causality that we happen to have as contingent human beings?

I raise these questions which are not new because they point to the need for a philosophy of mind that is less simplistic. On the one hand, yes, when we refer to the philosophy of mind which exists in Aristotle, we can admit that, in his language, in various and sundry places, Aristotle speaks about the human mind as something which is “separable, impassible, [and] unmixed.” It is “indestructible and eternal.” Hence, the suggestiveness of these words encourages a way of thinking which would want to point to something which is somehow totally other than ourselves in how we exist as human beings. The manner of our own being, when we advert to it and as we think about it, points to both its contingency and to absences of determination (relatively speaking: the potentiality of our human condition). Some of us (perhaps most of us) tend to be too well aware of the fact that, indeed, we exist as inconstant, mortal beings and that we are often lacking in determinations and formations that can be remedied, to some extent, if we should notice that we are constantly confronted by decisions that we must make and which, once made, determine how we are to live and think in a new way as human beings within changing sets of concrete circumstances. A malleability presents itself to us with respect to the nature and manner of our human living even as we should also notice that the intelligibility of our human nature points to a number of invariant principles which have yet to be entirely and satisfactorily understood. As we encounter ambiguities in the conceptuality of Aristotle's texts and controversies about the import or the meaning of his various texts, we realize that our reading of Aristotle depends more on the influence of other sources of meaning than a reading which restricts itself to the materiality of Aristotle's texts. If we think about how, in Averroes and Avicenna, we have philosophies of mind that are grounded in an Islamic understanding of God (how God exists), can we ask if, in Aquinas (and in the thought of others), we have philosophies of mind that are grounded in an understanding of God that is conditioned by a belief in an incarnate God? God almighty has entered into our human history. He assumed a human nature. He became a human being. He has joined his divine nature with a human nature in a way which points to an order of being where, here, God works through secondary causes in a way which respects the created kind of freedom which already belongs to the order of created causes, the kind of causality that we have as human beings and which belongs to how we think, understand, and live.

### **Soul as informed by Immortality**

In holding then to the individuality of our rational human souls (the distributed kind of being which it has amongst us as human beings, its multiplicity), it is not without reason then that, in conjunction with this teaching, using it as a convenient point of departure, the Church's Magisterium then also indicates that it must reject any belief or thesis which would want to espouse the mortality of our rational human souls. If, in fact, we cannot speak about the individuality of our rational human souls, we cannot then speak about the possibility of our individual immortality, an immortality that would seem to exist if we should adopt a point of view which refers and points to the immortality of our human souls (believing in the immortality of our human souls) or, in other words, with respect to a cognitional meaning that

can be invoked as a species of philosophical argument, if we should advert to a species of self-transcendence which belongs to our human souls given its activities and its passivities (how they exist within ourselves as human subjects), the mortality of our souls being rejected by the Church as a false teaching and also as a false conclusion since no arguments can be given in a way which can prove or demonstrate the truth of any claim which would want to speak about the mortality of our rational human souls.<sup>156</sup>

From the untruthfulness of any teaching which tries to claim that the rational human soul is mortal, it follows from this that the immortality of the human soul is to be upheld and believed: according to the teaching of the Fifth Lateran Council, simply stated, “the soul...as the form of the human body...is also immortal.”<sup>157</sup> The Church's Magisterium here does not allude directly to any arguments that are taken from philosophical forms of inquiry, arguments that can be used to uphold the truth of the Church's teaching about the immortality of human rational soul although, in the text of *Apostolici Regiminis*, it is noted that the individual immortality of the human soul “has obvious scriptural bases.”<sup>158</sup> Without it, as a dogmatic presupposition, we would not be able to speak in a consequent way about “the Resurrection of the Dead and eternal rewards and punishments.”<sup>159</sup> However, indirectly, *Apostolici Regiminis* alludes to arguments that have been developed over time by various of the Church's faithful as a way of underscoring the reasonableness and the truth of this particular teaching.<sup>160</sup> And so, from apprehensions of reasonableness come affirmations of truth. The Church's Magisterium, by declining to saying anything (at this time) about the existence or the value of any of these arguments,<sup>161</sup> permits

---

156Ott, p. 98.

157Constant, p. 361, quoting *Apostolici Regiminis*. For a sample restatement of this teaching as this can be found in later documents that have come to us from the Church's teaching office, we can refer, for instance, to *Recentiores episcoporum synodi* which was issued by the Holy See (the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) on May 11, 1979. In a manner which works with a later conceptuality which comes to us from later philosophies of mind that directly refer to the kind of experience which we have when we refer to consciousness of self (existing as a distinct, inner species of experience), it is said as follows about the question of immortality as it relates to human beings:

The Church affirms that a spiritual element survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human self' subsists. To designate this element, the Church uses the word 'soul', the accepted term in the usage of Scripture and Tradition.

Cf. *Vatican II More Postconciliar Documents*, Vol. II, ed. Austin Flannery O.P. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982), p. 502.

158Constant, p. 362.

159Constant, p. 362.

160Ott, pp. 98-99.

161Please note, at this time within the narrative of our study that, in the context of the later teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in *Gaudium et Spes*, which was promulgated on December 7, 1965, it was said that “man recognizes in himself a spiritual and immortal soul.” Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 14, as cited by *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, ed., Joseph Gallagher, trans. ed. (Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 212. Hence, with respect to how we can know about the immortality of our human souls, this immortality is known by us through a form of self-reflection which exists as a form of rumination (as a “laying hold of the proper truth of the matter” that

the teaching of arguments which have been adapted and fashioned in a manner that can successfully point to the truth of the Church's teaching.

With respect then to some of these arguments (attempting a tentative summary of them), from Plato for instance, it has been argued that the rational human soul is immortal because it cannot be divided into any parts. Material things exist essentially as composites.<sup>162</sup> They can be divided into further, smaller material parts and if we attempt to divide these parts into even smaller parts, we continue to get smaller material parts, *ad infinitum*. The materiality remains. It endures. Each little part is as material as is the next and, at the same time too, no part can be ever identified with that which exists as a larger or greater whole. A whole is always greater than that which would exist as a part. In the destruction of material beings, death occurs through a process of dissolution which is identified as decomposition. A whole is reduced or it is deconstructed into its constituent parts and, as noted, the parts can get smaller and smaller. Thus, a thing as a greater whole ceases to be what it had once been as a greater whole. It loses its identity. When, for example, a statue is broken into bits and pieces (its parts), it ceases to be what it had been as a statue.

However, if we should attend to the intellectual rational human soul, although parts or aspects can be distinguished (for example, the distinction between theoretical human reason and practical human reason in both the thought of Augustine and Aquinas),<sup>163</sup> such a soul cannot be divided into parts which can then be added together to produce a greater whole which is to be identified with the being of a rational soul. A soul does not exist in itself as a quantifiable thing (having length, breath, and width) and, in its relation to any body, it gives nothing to a body which could possibly exist in quantifiable terms or which could be possibly expressed in quantifiable terms. In the function or the contribution which is made (what we have) if we should speak about the being and presence of a soul, effects or consequences can be alluded to if we should refer to how a soul exists in a manner which is entirely unique to it (souls differing from bodies) and how it is joined or related to that which could exist as a body (as a specification of material being). However, nothing is to be understood or known (it is unintelligible for us) if we should try to refer to some kind of partial or incremental presence which could possibly belong to a soul: determinations which would refer to specifications of some kind of more or less since all determinations with respect to the being and the condition of a soul exist in unquantifiable terms (hence, in an immaterial, non-material way). Hence, the simplicity of the intellectual rational soul (its lack of composition or the fullness of its being wherever or however it exists) points to its pervasiveness and its fundamental stability (its permanence or constancy) and so, from this, as a sort of derivative, we can speak about its imperishability, alleging its incorruptibility or, in other words, we can speak about its immortality (the immortality of its existence).<sup>164</sup> By itself, as a

---

arises in us to the degree that we attend to our “interior qualities”), attending to our consciousness of self and to the form or the structure of this consciousness (despite how this consciousness varies as we move from individual to individual). Through our self-knowledge, it follows from this that “man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe...his intelligence...can with genuine certitude attain to reality as knowable.” Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 15, as cited by *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott, pp. 212-213.

<sup>162</sup>Steward Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 15, citing Plato, *Timmaeus*, 43A.

<sup>163</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 9, as cited by Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts* (London: Oxford University Press, p. 26, #65).

<sup>164</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 6. Please note here thus that, if all the souls of

form, as a non-material kind of being, a soul is not able to cease to be what it is as a form. As matter by itself can never cease to exist as matter (matter is matter), no form can cease to exist as a form precisely because it is a form.<sup>165</sup> It exists as a form. To summarize some of the teaching that comes to us from Augustine in terms of how Aquinas had known it and how he was interpreting it in the context of his theology: “the soul *is said to be simple in relation to the body, because it is not extended quantitatively through the various parts of the body.*”<sup>166</sup> When a body is informed by a soul (in this case, the human soul, the rational human soul), the soul fully exists in all parts of the body, irrespective of the identity or the character of any given part. It is said to contain the body because it functions as a principle of order with respect to the parts of a body and how all the parts of a body relate or exist with each other in a way which points to an immaterial kind of unity which a given body possesses.<sup>167</sup> Because body and soul differ from each other in terms of a real distinction (a different set of properties), we cannot understand our souls if we should employ analogies that are determined by a material kind of knowing which knows bodies and which cannot distinguish between that which exists as a body and that which can exist as some other kind of being.

From Aristotle where he argues or where he points to a positive association which exists between the actuation (or the achievement) of our human cognition in knowledge and the immortality of our human souls,<sup>168</sup> it is to be argued that the soul's immortality is shown to the degree that its operation is seen not to exist as the act of a body (the act of a bodily organ).<sup>169</sup> Our human acts of sensing always directly rely on the use of our bodily organs. We see because of our healthy human eyes and the focusing which occurs through our various acts of seeing. Human acts of sensing exist as bodily acts or as corporeal acts. But, on the other hand, acts of understanding exist in a completely different way: independently of our various acts of sense even as they must work with both our different acts and data of sense and also our different acts of human imagining in order to come up with apt images or phantasms which could possibly point to a relation that can be understood by means which allegedly exist for us as that which exists as mind or *nous* which, in itself (technically), cannot be seen or perceived by us through an act of ocular vision (whether yours or mine) as often as we might say within the context of our ordinary speech that, when we understand, we see. We see. We understand. Metaphorical forms of perception which refer in fact to the having of ideas in understanding (our experience of understanding) differ from acts of perception that are defined or which are delimited by the kind of activity and reception which peculiarly exists whenever we refer to our different acts of human sensing and the kind of experiencing which occurs through our different acts of human sensing.

---

living beings are characterized by the virtue of simplicity, then, on the basis of simplicity, we would have to argue that the souls of all living beings are immortal and this is an argument which fails if we should hold, for reasons that have yet to be identified, that the souls of plants and animals are mortal but not so the souls of human beings. Cf. James B. Reichmann, *Philosophy of the Human Person* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1985), pp. 245-256. The simplicity of rational human souls is other than the simplicity of other souls (every other kind of soul that could refer to the being of a living thing).

<sup>165</sup>Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015), pp. 151-162.

<sup>166</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 1. See also Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 49, 2.

<sup>167</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 8, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>168</sup>Aristotle, *De Anima*, 430a22-25.

<sup>169</sup>Aquinas, *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 10, 742; Mortimer J. Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody Difficult Thought Made Easy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1997), p. 183.

Put in other words (and with the help of the fuller kind of analysis that we can find in Aquinas), we can move toward a thesis about the immortality of the human soul if we can attend first to its immateriality (if we should understand the immateriality of its operations) and then, from there, understand the immateriality of its existence or how, in its own way, the rational human soul exists apart from the influence of material conditions. It subsists as an incorporeal, subsistent principle (using the kind of language that Aquinas uses) or, in other words, it exists independently of the existence of every kind of material condition.<sup>170</sup> It is not limited by any acts or organs of sense which have their own finality, their own nature, their own orientation and proper object.<sup>171</sup> As a point of departure thus, we can note (we should note) that being or reality is the formal, final, adequate, or primal object of our human intellects (our human acts of understanding).<sup>172</sup> As a receiver or receptor, as a species of passive potency,<sup>173</sup> our minds are wholly orientated toward possible experiences of form or intelligibility.<sup>174</sup> The human intellect, as a species of possible intellect, is that by which it is possible for us to become all things (*quo est omnia fieri*) because, with respect to this intellect of ours (to the extent that, in fact, it also exists as a species of mover or, in other words, as a species of active potency with an initiative of its own), it is constituted or it is formed by a striving or an orientation (a finality) which is self-constitutive: a striving which is directed toward the totality of being or the totality of reality (being or

---

170See Feser, *Aquinas*, pp. 158-159, for how he explains the intelligibility of Aquinas's arguments and how we can move from the immateriality of the rational human soul to the thesis of its immortality.

171*Summa Theologicae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 2. See David P. Lang, "Aquinas's Impediment Argument for the Spirituality of the Human Intellect," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003): 107-111, where Lang speaks about how Aquinas understood the finality of the human intellect as distinct from that which belongs to acts of sense which must rely on bodily organs if they are to engage in operations that are proper only to acts of sense. Although our human understanding is positively related to our bodily organs and our acts of sense, at the same time too, it is not tied to our bodily organs in the way that the senses rely on bodily organs for the actuation of their functioning, the absence of an intrinsic form of dependence accordingly pointing to the immortality of the human rational soul.

As Aquinas, in various sources, argues his case, when sensed objects make too great of an impression on our sensing organs, these organs can be destroyed, and with their destruction, sense. But, this does not happen with respect to our human understanding. Cf. *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 687-688. When our understanding receives an understanding of things that is fully intelligible, the plenitude of intelligibility does not destroy our experience of understanding. The understanding is not obliterated even if, perhaps, it can be overwhelmed. The reliance of our understanding on our acts and organs of sense does not thus restrict the scope of its possible inquiry nor our desire for an understanding about everything which could possibly exist.

172Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 2; q. 79, a. 7; q. 87, a. 3, ad 1.

173Aquinas, *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 671-681.

174Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 1. As Aquinas distinguishes here between knowing subjects and non-knowing subjects, non-knowing subjects possess only one form which is the inherent intelligibility that a non-knowing subject has as a particular thing. But, a knowing subject is able to receive forms or meanings beyond the one which it already has and is. A knowing subject can receive forms belonging to other things and, by this reception, it experiences an enlargement, a growth within itself.



reality in general),<sup>175</sup> and which gives a form or a structure to the order of our human cognition. This striving, in itself, is not limited to incarnately existing things which exist in the way that they do because they exist within a set of material conditions, their forms or their intelligibility existing within matter or the data of sense where matter always enjoys a form of constitution which refers to coordinates of space and time (matter apart from the organization of matter which exists through the presence of intelligibility that is given to us by way of form, the principle of form).<sup>176</sup> Where the proper object of the incarnate kind of understanding which belongs to us as human beings refers to form or intelligibility as it exists within matter (our experience of material conditions), a larger or a more comprehensive object is to be distinguished when we refer to the final, the formal, or the adequate object of our human understanding: being, reality wherever it exists or however it exists (whether with an material component which we can sense or without a material component that can never be sensed).<sup>177</sup> The formal, final object is whatever can be understood. The intentionality of our human

---

175Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 7: “the intellect regards its object according to the common concept of being, because the possible intellect is “that by which it is possible to become all things,” as quoted in Giovanni B. Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 145, n. 67.

176*Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 681; Gilby, *Philosophical Texts*, p. 237, n. 1.

177See Bernard Lonergan, “Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought,” *Collection*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 137, where Aquinas distinguishes between the proper object of the human intellect and a second kind of object which is “being in its full sweep.” Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1. While our inquiring seeks to know the intelligibility or the forms of all things insofar as all things exist and so have being, because our human cognitive activity always works with images to apprehend forms that are located within accumulations of data or matter, when we move from proper objects to final objects, an extrapolation is needed if we are to transcend the weight and influence of every kind of material condition although, at the same time, if we should attend to how our human knowing occurs with respect to forms that are located within matter (the proper objects of our human cognition), we should realize too that, in this more limited type of cognition, a self-transcending act of understanding is operative as we put aside, prescind, or distance ourselves from the peculiarity of material coordinates as these exist whenever we refer to our different acts of sense and the data which we immediately and directly know through our different acts of human sensing.

With respect to final or formal objects, within this context, if our focus is restricted to that which could possibly exist as an intelligible object, no real distinction can be alluded to which can divide naturally known truths from truths which are supernaturally known through belief or faith and the acceptance of God's grace since both kinds of truth, as intelligible objects, are informed by presences of intelligibility. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 330, n. 83, citing Lonergan: “A supernatural truth is distinguished from a natural truth, not by the species of the thing that is known, but by the intellectual light by which it is known.” Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Analysis Fidei*, p. 27. The intellectual light refers to a genus which can be differentiated into a number of different species: (1) evidence as it is grasped by us in created acts of reflective understanding; (2) the reasonableness of believing a given teacher or a given source whose reliability we can acknowledge in our created acts of believing; (3) evidence as it can be known by us in acts of understanding which exist as acts of beatific vision; and (4) the reasonableness of believing or submitting to an authority which an act of believing recognizes as divine. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 113, citing Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum*, p. 50.

understanding is such that it continually wishes to understand all things despite what could be the being of these different things.<sup>178</sup>

In attending then to the immateriality of operations as these could possibly refer to the form or the nature of the rational human soul (what a given thing is able to do given its form or nature: what it is or how it exists), two distinct approaches can be distinguished depending on the kind of starting point that is selected for the kind of argument that one would like to mount. Within the context of Aquinas's thought, we could begin by referring to the kind of nature, form, or intelligibility which is the proper object of our human cognition (our human inquiry leading to acts of understanding).<sup>179</sup> If this object of our understanding exists as a species of "universal," if it exists in a way which totally differs from the kind of object that is known through our different acts of sense (sense knows objects in their particularity; understanding knows objects in their universality), then, if an identity exists between a knowing subject and an understood object within the order of our human cognition, then, from the universality which exists in that which we have understood, we can conclude to a universality which somehow exists within the knowing of ourselves as knowers, the kind of subjectivity which we have and participate in as human beings. In the human experience of understanding (in contrast with our different acts of human sensing), a lack of restriction is to be adverted to. As human beings, through our understanding, we can participate or exist in something that is not subject to variation and change and so, from this absence of variation and change, we can conclude that, within the human rational soul, an invariant reality, an invariant trait is to be distinguished. It is void of variation or change. Glibly put, a knowledge of immortal, eternal truths points to another species or type of immortality which exists whenever we speak about the being of our rational human souls. By employing this type of approach, we can accordingly move from externally existing objects toward our personal acts and then, from these acts, toward the nature, the possibility, or the potency of our human cognition: what it is as a rational type of soul and how it exists as a rational soul. The kind of cognition that we have points to the kind of being which we happen to be and are relative to the existence of our rational human souls even if we should decide that, as human beings, we exist neither as simply our bodies nor as simply our souls but, instead, as a combination of the two together through a mutual form of ordination and interaction that exists between them: the body exists for its soul; the soul, for its body.

In the context thus of this type of approach, to illustrate how this type of argument works and the kind of force or the kind of rationality which belongs to it, we can think about how a form exists within a given set of material conditions and how the same form could possibly exist within the subjectivity of a given human knower. If we say that the indwelling of a form within a set of material conditions determines what a given thing is, then, with Feser, we would say that "catness" or "triangularity" determines that this matter or body is a cat and that this other matter, body, or image is a triangle.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup>*Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 2; Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3, 4, 429a18: "everything is a possible object of thought."

<sup>179</sup>Feser, *Aquinas*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>180</sup>Feser, *Aquinas*, pp. 154-155. Feser's account explains the kind of argument which we can find in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 2 when Feser attempts to explain why Aquinas uses a material analogy to argue that the receptivity of our human understanding is not to be compared with the kind of receptivity which exists when we refer to our differing acts of human sensing. How a form exists within a set of material conditions totally differs from how it can exist within a set of mental or intellectual conditions or, in other words, "the intellect can...take on the form of other things...without losing its own form." Cf. Feser, p. 153, citing Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 49, 3. In this way,

Subtract the form and what we would have would be something that could be possibly a cat or a triangle. Now, if we were to try to argue or to assume that the human mind exists as a bodily or material thing (if we were to assume, for instance, that no difference exists between that which exists as a brain and that which exists as a mind), then, if the mind were to be seen as essentially a physical bodily thing, having the kind of potency which belongs to brain as matter (material potency as opposed to mental or intellectual potency), then, within this context, we would have to conclude that its reception of form (either the form of catness or the form of triangularity) would result or lead to that which would exist as a cat or that which would exist as a triangle. Cats always exist when matter (when a material potency) is informed by catness and triangles, when matter (when a material potency) is informed by triangularity. The brain *as allegedly a type of body* would cease to exist in fact as a brain as, in these cases, it would become either a cat or a triangle. The brain would cease to play the kind of role which belongs to it as a species of material cause.<sup>181</sup> However, as we should obviously

---

cognitionally, how we exist as human beings can participate in how other things exist in the manner which belongs to them.

<sup>181</sup>To determine how the brain has a specific function within human cognition, it is argued that we can refer to images and phantasms about which Aquinas speaks and which are so essential for us in eliciting acts of insight in our acts of understanding. Cf. Francis Selman, *Aspects of Aquinas* (Dublin, Veritas, 2005), p. 101, citing Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 7; Mortimer J. Adler, *Intellect: Mind Over Matter* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 50. As Adler argues, “the exercise of our power of conceptual thought depends on the exercise of our powers of perception, memory, and imagination, which are corporeal powers embodied in our sense-organs and brain.” While Aquinas seems to say nothing explicitly about a direct relation or correlation between the human mind and the human brain, in his work, *Intellect: Mind Over Matter*, pp. 56-57, Mortimer Adler argues that Aquinas was not unaware of the existence and the influence of brain injuries and how it can be said too that “toxic substances and fatigue poisons” can interfere with the intellectual life that a given subject can have at any given time. However, even if we admit this, it can be argued that, in Aquinas, “no inconsistency” exists between admitting that the human brain functions as a necessary condition for the being and the life of our human understanding and, at the same time, admitting that our acts of understanding point to the necessary existence of immaterial conditions which must exist apart from the material kind of being which belongs to the life and the functioning of our human brains. The being of immaterial conditions, in their immateriality, are not determined or they are not conditioned by the being of material conditions.

For a complete accounting of the nature of our human cognition, we must therefore always attend to two kinds of conditions which would have to refer to the existence of material and immaterial conditions and how it is said that these conditions relate and point to each other. Our human brains exist for the sake of our later acts of understanding although, as noted, our brains differ from our minds if, by our brains, we refer to material conditions and if, by our minds, we refer to the being of immaterial conditions. Necessary conditions differ from that which would exist as a sufficient condition. The brain exists as a necessary condition but it is not a sufficient condition. Quoting Adler's summary (p. 47): while “we *cannot* think conceptually *without* our brains,...we *do not* think conceptually *with* our brains.” Through our minds and not through our brains or, in other words, through our thinking and our speculating, we can think about things which we can never possibly perceive or behold through an act of sense or an act of imagination. Cf. Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody*, pp. 182-183; *Intellect : Mind Over Matter*, p. 6; pp. 47-48. Our thinking transcends our seeing since we can think about things that we cannot picture or imagine. In an argument which comes to us from

know, we cannot assent to irrational conclusions of this kind given the absence of evidence and verification. To the degree that we know about cats or triangles, we do not turn into cats or triangles.

The kind of potency or the kind of receptivity that we have when we refer to any potential kind of knowledge which we can have as human beings accordingly points to a different kind of being which exists (a different kind of being which is given to us) when we come to know about cats or triangles or any other kind of being which could be constituted by a material component and a formal component that are somehow joined and bonded together. The growth that we experience in our understanding and knowledge points to a cognitional form of growth which, in turn, points to a perfection. When that which exists as matter receives a specific determination (a form) which turns it into a particular kind of

---

Aristotle in a way which points to a real distinction which exists between the potency of our senses and the potency of our understanding and a real difference which exists between the operation of our senses versus the kind of operation which exists with respect to our acts of understanding, it is to be noted in the context of our experience of self that, when any of our senses are strongly stimulated by an external material agent, our senses will be impeded. Our senses will be temporarily rendered inoperative and, at times too, they can be destroyed or they can be rendered permanently inoperative. A loud sound deafens us. A bright light blinds us. But, when our understanding is stimulated or when it is informed by an idea that changes our understanding of things in a way which reveals a hitherto unknown unsuspected order of things, the more profound or the greater is the idea that is received, the greater is the exercise or the experience of our understanding. Our understanding grows with the further reception of new ideas and the greater the reception of any given idea, the more powerful a given idea, the greater will be our understanding. Our understanding is not diminished or destroyed. It is stimulated and enhanced. The difference in effects accordingly points to a difference in the manner of being and relation. Material conditions help us in terms of facilitating our possible understanding of things (given the role that is played by the apprehension of apt images or phantasms in our learning and in our understanding of things) but, oppositely, our understanding (our minds) exist in a way that is distinct and which is separable from the being of material conditions. The dependence of our minds or the dependence of our understanding refers to an extraneous relation that exists with respect to the good and the value of material conditions (the brain included) but not to the being of an inherent or an intrinsic relation that would have to exist with respect to the being of material conditions. Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, 429a, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, Modern Library Classics (New York: Random House, 2009), p. 590, as cited by Neil Ormerod, *A Public God: Natural Theology Reconsidered* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), p. 91, n. 11. We depend on our acts of sensing, we depend on the kind of brain that we each have. But, ultimately, the dependence is not total; the dependence is not complete, final, or entirely determinative. A life of the mind exists independently of the kind of movement and life which exists within our senses or the kind of movement which exists within our brains as this indicated through the waves that can be detected within the life and being of our brains. Closing with a quotation that comes to us from another commentator, “the power of understanding far exceeds...what we would expect to be the intrinsic capacity of the brain material.” Cf. John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, Clarendon Law Series, ed. H. L. A. Hart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), quoted by Matthew C. Ogilvie, *Faith Seeking Understanding: The Functional Specialty, “Systematics,” in Bernard Lonergan’s Method in Theology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), p. 78. In the information that has been coming to us of late from new sources of study which have attended to near death experiences as a phenomena and data which merit investigation, our cognitive awareness has been found to continue to exist even if it should be the case that, now, our knowing occurs in a manner which is divorced from anything which would exist as an

thing, we have a shift or a movement which, externally, points to a metaphysical species of perfection. That which exists within a world which is other than ourselves becomes something else or it experiences a change which, in some way, adds to its being or to the activities which belong to a given being to the degree that it exists as an active, receptive subject. However, when we, as human beings, receive a form which refers to something like “catness” or “triangularity” (among many other possible examples), the growth or the perfection which is received adds to how we experience the humanity which we happen to have as human beings. We continue, as before, to exist as human beings (our form remains, our identity never changes) although, in some way (big or small), our humanity is augmented. To a greater degree it exists although according to a manner which is not determined by any measurements of size or quantity. In fact, and significantly, we can continue to receive new determinations of form without losing the forms that we have already acquired and the overall result is a further enlargement of the condition of our human existence: how we experience our lives and how we live as human beings. The reception of new forms does not detract from our previous receptions of forms. We can continue to grow in understanding and wisdom and we could also possibly grow in the range or the breath of our humanness if we should then proceed to make decisions which reflect the being of truths that we have come to apprehend and know through a new kind of union which can emerge (to a fuller or greater extent) between, on the one hand, the being of truths that we have understood and known and, on the other hand, the being of our individual subjectivities as our subjectivities move from acts of human knowing into acts of human willing and doing, the willing and doing of other kinds of human action which can arise and exist in the wake of our human acts of cognition. The kind of delimitation or the kind of determination which exists whenever a form is received by any given instance of matter is transcended by another kind of delimitation or determination which exists whenever a form is received by a potency that is not material but immaterial (because it is not conditioned by any specifications which would refer to material determinations of one kind or another). The ingress of immateriality which exists within the self-transcendence of our human knowing and willing points to a species of immortality which, in some way, belongs to the human spirit.<sup>182</sup> While the contingency and the createdness of human beings points to a like contingency and createdness which belongs to rational human souls, these same conditions do not imply that rational human souls are bereft of the kind of immortality that naturally belongs to them.

Turning now to a second approach that can be adopted as a way of pointing to why we should speak about immortality of the human rational soul, as we have noticed, it can be argued (and it has been argued) that that which exists as form within matter is to be viewed as a species of first mover within the order of secondary causes as this exists within human cognition (functioning as a species of first mover relative to ourselves as human beings in the kind of knowing which we do as human beings). The incarnate kinds of being which exist in our world beyond or other than our personal individual existence elicit operations or actualizations that belong to us as human beings. Hence, as we have noticed, from objects to subjects, we have moved toward an apprehension or an understanding which

---

act of sense. We refer to a form of cognition which points to a transphysical kind of experience which points to a transphysical kind of component which transcends the life and being of our brains after the death of our bodies. Apart from any union with our bodies, as human beings, as subjects, we continue to enjoy cognitive life. We continue to see and to understand things although in a manner which has ceased to move from the kind of data which belong to the givens of our sensing experience. Cf. Robert Spitzer, *The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendental Nature from Experience and Reason* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), pp. 174-181.

<sup>182</sup>Feser, *Aquinas*, p. 157.

can speak about a kind of immortality which should belong to us, existing with respect to our human souls. However, if, in moving from objects to subjects, we have encountered cognitional acts that, in some way, connect the immortality of an externally existing form with the kind of form or soul which belongs to us as human beings, we can engage in a converse form of argument which would directly attend to the kind of activity which we have and which occurs in and through our human acts of understanding.

In this context, as a point of departure, we admit that an immediate kind of knowing is always given to us through our different acts of human sensing. In mere sensing, something is immediately known by us. Something is experienced. Something is given as a datum of sense. Something is known in a material way. But, if we attend to how we can move from this knowledge of particulars toward a possible knowledge of universals (shifting from a cognitive experience of particularity toward a cognitive experience of universality), we should notice, as we attend to the data of our experience of self as we are engaged in various acts of cognition, that, in moving from that which is particular to that which is universal (from the givens of matter to ideas, forms referring to the content of ideas), as we play with material images to find a suggestive or apt image which could possibly point to a form or an intelligibility which we can understand as an idea, then, when acts of understanding are given to us, by means of these acts, through this kind or species of cognitive act, in our understanding, we are always prescinding, we are always distancing ourselves from all the material conditions which were first given to us through our various acts of sense.

In the kind of language that Aquinas uses, our acts of understanding are characterized by a form or an intelligibility which refers to abstraction (the nature of abstraction).<sup>183</sup> To explain the kind of activity or the effect which exists in our acts of understanding, we say that, through abstraction, through an abstracting kind of activity which occurs in understanding, material components are separated from components which exist as forms or, to speak more accurately,<sup>184</sup> a form is separated from its connections with matter and, in the immaterial assimilation of a form, a form is separated out. When material components are put to the side and when they are left behind, a form or an intelligibility is identified and, for the first time, it is known for what it is as it exists in itself.<sup>185</sup> Hence, as conjugates

---

<sup>183</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 50, 3. I cite from the *Summa Contra Gentiles* although references to abstraction abound in other texts by Aquinas, especially in the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>184</sup>See Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody*, p. 181, where he distinguishes between physical or chemical processes (rating as material processes) and other processes which exist in an immaterial way. In ingesting any food, the matter and the form of certain kinds of food are taken into our bodies in a material way and then, through subsequent digestion, the matter of ingested food is removed from the forms which had been attached to them. The removal or the detachment of the matter leads to the disappearance of the previously existing indwelling forms and, as a consequence, these souls as forms perish. They disappear. The matter which is acquired is incorporated into the matter of our own bodies. However, when we turn to the immaterial kind of assimilation which occurs through our abstracting acts of human cognition, it is the form of things which is the object and focus of attention. A form is separated from all attached matter and it is brought or it is incorporated into the furniture of our minds. In our language, we employ a material analogy that, hopefully, is not too misleading. As an immaterially existing being, an understood form joins other immaterially existing beings which exist already within the compass of our understanding and the store of our knowledge.

<sup>185</sup>Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody*, p. 182.

of space and time are transcended (or as they are bracketed and put to the side through a form of self-transcendence which exists through our acts of understanding), we discover that, within our acts of understanding, there exists a kind of life which is to be distinguished from the kind of life which exists and which we experience when we restrict our inquiries or our knowledge to the being and play of material conditions. As much as, through our acts of understanding or for the sake of our possible acts of understanding, we rely on any givens which exist for us through our acts and data of sense, at the same time too, we find that, when understanding comes to us or when understanding is given to us as a kind of gift (understanding existing essentially as a reception and not as an activity), we find that, in our cognition, we are detached from the givens of sense. We are detached from every kind of variable that is informed by shifting determinations of space and time. The temporality and thus the contingency which is endemic to determinations of space and time (the contingency which belongs to determinations of space and time) is entirely left behind as a species of being and so, from the lack or the absence of contingency which we experience within ourselves (even as we exist as contingent beings), we find that something immortal exists within ourselves. In our contingency, we discover our immortality: although, yes, our bodies and our souls are created (they exist as created things), at the same time too, something immortal exists within the life and being of our human souls and this immortality is not without some kind of positive relation which overflows into the kind of life which belongs to our bodies. The kind of body which we have is informed by the kind of soul which we have as human beings and, in addition, the contingency of our rational human souls with respect to the manner of its origin does not tell or preclude any conclusions which would want to speak about an ongoing, immortal form of existence which our souls have acquired because of how and why they exist with the form which they happen to have.

### **Truth in its Integrity or its Absoluteness in our Knowledge of It**

Given then the truth of the Church's teaching about the individual oneness of our rational human souls (each of us has a rational human soul) and given also the truth of the Church's teaching about the immortality of our individual rational human souls, it is to be inferred from this that no contrary points of view are to be tolerated as true nor are they to be believed to be true since, as the Church's universal Magisterium teaches and as the Church's ordinary Magisterium has taught on other occasions,<sup>186</sup> truth is such that “truth never contradicts truth.”<sup>187</sup> Hence, in the thematization or in the articulation of this position as this has emerged in the later teaching of the Church's universal Magisterium (according to the teaching of a later Pope), it is to be said that “every truth – if it really is truth [if it is authentic]<sup>188</sup> – [it] presents itself as universal, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true

---

<sup>186</sup>Please note here that, when referring to the teaching of the ordinary Magisterium, a qualification is introduced that is not so clearly stated or indicated in the text of *Apostolici Regiminis*. Nothing is said there about the condemnations of Bishop Tempier in 1277 which, in their own way, had referred to the notion of “truth never contradicting truth” (the impossibility of this) although, judging from the tenor of *Apostolic Regiminis* (in terms of what is said and what is not said), the kind of implicit or implied reference to earlier traditional teaching suggests the authority of a teaching subject which is to be identified with the day to day ministry of the Church's ordinary Magisterium.

<sup>187</sup>Pope Leo X, Lateran Council V, “Apostolici Regiminis,” *Sources*, p. 237, #738.

<sup>188</sup>*Correctio filialis de haeresibus propagatis*, p. 22, [http://www.correctiofilialis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Correctio-filialis\\_English\\_1.pdf](http://www.correctiofilialis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Correctio-filialis_English_1.pdf) (accessed September 28, 2017). Within the square brackets above, I cite an alternative translation.

for all people and at all times.”<sup>189</sup> The truth or a truth is to be regarded as something which exists as a transcendent thing. It transcends the being of all spatial and temporal conditions and any cultural differences which are determined by the presence or the influence of spatial temporal conditions.

Hence, on the basis of this premiss and given the evidence in texts which points to the wording of a new dogmatic definition which is rendered by the Church's universal Magisterium *in an extraordinary way* through the instrumentality of *Apostolici Regiminis*, it is said as follows (by Pope Leo X and the Fifth Lateran Council) with respect to the status in truth of the Church's religious teaching and how it is to be compared with anything that is taught differently by other persons (in whatever the context), according to the principle of contradiction or if we adhere to the principle of contradiction in what we might think, understand, and say:

...we define (*definimus*) that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree (*decernimus*) that all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, should be avoided in every way and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the catholic faith.<sup>190</sup>

Hence, from Pope Leo X and the Fifth Lateral Council, we have an unrestricted negative judgment and a censure which recalls the propagation of an earlier magisterial teaching and a censure which has come to us initially from earlier judgments that had been given at a local, provincial level when, on March 7, 1277, the then Bishop of Paris, Étienne (Stephen) Tempier, issued a comprehensive set of condemnations which, in its text, listed 219 censored propositions. In his introduction, within the text of his prologue, Bishop Tempier had averred that “[some philosophers] state things to be true according to philosophy, but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there are two contrary truths [*quasi sint due contrarie veritates*] and as if there is a truth in the sayings of pagans in hell that is opposed to the truth of Sacred Scripture.”<sup>191</sup> Hence, as a consequence of this contradiction, a fundamental incompatibility is

---

189John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, p. 43, #27.

190Constant, p. 363.

191Bartosz Brożek, “Medieval Theories of Double Truth,” citing the text of the 1277 condemnation in [http://www.academia.edu/344483/Medieval\\_Theories\\_of\\_Double\\_Truth](http://www.academia.edu/344483/Medieval_Theories_of_Double_Truth) (accessed August 29, 2015); Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), p. 142; p. 146; Ali Ghorbani Sini and Fath Ali Akbari, “The Clerical Double Truth Theory in Thirteenth Century,” *Academia*, see [https://www.academia.edu/8629383/The\\_Clerical\\_Double\\_Truth\\_Theory\\_in\\_Thirteenth\\_Century](https://www.academia.edu/8629383/The_Clerical_Double_Truth_Theory_in_Thirteenth_Century), (accessed October 10, 2015), p. 2. Please note here that, to understand the text of Tempier's condemnation, a teaching whose truth is not to be rejected by the belief of Parisian Catholics, it is not enough simply to read his words and then attend to the meanings which allegedly shine through the rendering of the words (the meanings being expressed by his choice of words). Indeed, Tempier puts words together to cite the meaning of a given teaching (a given point of view) that he is censuring (a teaching or point of view that, in his judgment, is being propagated to the hurt of religion and the fidelity of observant religious practice). His wording identifies that which he is censuring and condemning and so, for this reason, it can be argued and it has been argued that Tempier is to be regarded as, in fact, “the author of the 'doctrine of double truth'” (the originator of this teaching). Cf. Leinsle, p. 146. His wording conceptualizes the gist or the orientation of a way of thinking and understanding which has come to his attention, a way of thinking and understanding which is to be



to alleged and admitted. It is said thus that a fundamental divergence or a fundamental separation can be found to exist between two different orders of knowledge if, on the one hand, we compare the teaching of philosophers who are ensconced within the practice of philosophy with the teaching of theologians who labor within the practice, the mission, and the goals of theology. The lack of coherence which can be found at times between that which philosophy knows and how philosophy knows and that which theology knows and how theology knows (in admittedly pointing to a lack of logical integrity with respect to how the principle of contradiction is being observed) – this lack of coherence, at the same time, points to a dissonance which allegedly exists within our apprehensions of truth (a lack of absoluteness with respect to the truthfulness of any truth, a lack of belief in the absolute

---

regarded with some suspicion and so, for this reason, its understanding (its thorough understanding) would require from us an investigation which can attend to its underlying philosophical roots and the story of its subsequent elaboration and development: a tradition of thought which is said to date from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and the philosophy of Averroes (d. 1198) although it can be argued and it is argued that the kind of understanding and the mode of expression that we find in Averroes is not to be identified with the same kind of understanding and the mode of expression which we find in the magisterial judgment which comes down to us from the Bishop of Paris in 1277. It is also argued, similarly, that the kind of understanding and the mode of expression that we find among the Averroists, Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, is also not to be identified with the understanding and the mode of expression that is found in the judgments and pronouncements of Bishop Tempier. Summarizing thus the gist of Averroes's teaching, using the phraseology of his own words (in translation):

Now since this religion is true and summons to the study which leads to the knowledge of Truth, we the Muslim community know definitely that demonstrative study does not lead to [conclusions] conflicting with what Scripture [or Religious Law] has given us; for truth does not oppose truth but accords with it and bears witness to it.

Cf. Brožek, “Medieval Theories of Double Truth,” p. 3, citing Averroes 1967, p. 50. See also Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 123, where he cites *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, a translation, with introduction and notes, of the *Kitāb faṣl al-maquāl* by G. F. Hourani, p. 50 (London, 1961). According to one summary of the kind of teaching which comes to us from the thought of Averroes:

...one and the same truth is understood clearly in philosophy and expressed allegorically in theology. The scientific formulation of truth is achieved only in philosophy, but the same truth is expressed in theology, only in a different manner.

Cf. Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume II Medieval Philosophy*, p. 199. In Averroes's own words (Brožek, pp. 3-4):

[We] affirm definitely that whenever the conclusion of a demonstration is in conflict with the apparent meaning of Scripture [or Religious Law], that apparent meaning admits of allegorical interpretation according to

kind of assent which normally belongs to every kind of truth as truth)<sup>192</sup> or, in other words, a general perspective or a general point of view which would want to begin to hold that a mysterious inner connection does not, in fact, exist between the teaching and the labors of philosophers and philosophy and the teaching and the labors of theologians and theology: a mysterious inner unity which would allegedly join these two disciplines together as if they should be seen to exist as, approximately, two sides of the same coin, both sides referring to the same reality in a mutually supportive, complementary fashion.<sup>193</sup> While, yes, each discipline enjoys its own freedom and its own degree of autonomy (a different kind of methodology being operative in each discipline, each discipline working from a different set of first principles), at the same time too, if we should attend to the context of philosophy (in determining this specific context) and if we should then attend to the context of theology (in

---

the rules for such interpretation in Arabic. This proposition is questioned by no Muslim and doubted by no believer. (...) Indeed we may say that whenever a statement in Scripture [or Religious Law] conflicts in its apparent meaning with a conclusion of demonstration, if Scripture [or Religious Law] is considered carefully, the rest of its contents searched page by page, there will invariably be found among the expressions of Scripture [or Religious Law] something which in its apparent meaning bears witness to that allegorical interpretation or comes close to bearing witness.

With respect to the teaching of Siger of Brabant and the teaching of Boethius of Dacia, to cut a long story short, although in Siger of Brabant and in Boethius of Dacia we can find a way of thinking which strongly distinguishes the methodology of philosophy from the methodology of theology (we refer here to the reality of a real distinction and not to the reality of a conceptual or verbal distinction), we do not find words which clearly aver to a theory of double truth as this was presented at a later date in 1277 by Bishop Tempier of Paris when citing and condemning a listing of 219 errant propositions. Please find below a lengthy text that is taken from the analysis of Ulrich Leinsle, in his *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, p. 143. It seems best at this point to summarize the thinking and thought of both Siger and Boethius even if we should admit that innuendoes and suggestions can be found in their way of thinking and speaking which lend themselves to conclusions that would eventually lead to a notion or a theory of double truth (conceptualized in the way that it was presented by the Bishop of Paris in 1277). Bluntly put (as we would wish to allege): if the methodology of philosophical inquiry is too much separated from the methodology of theological inquiry (or if it is entirely separated from the methodology of theological inquiry), if philosophical inquiry ceases to exist within Catholic theology as something that is done by Catholic theologians (functioning as a theological tool or instrument), then, from this, we can conclude that the respective findings of these two disciplines will begin to diverge, increasing existing within two separate worlds (an unbridgeable gulf would exist between them) and so no real communion or no real connection is to be found between them, a connection which would join them together to form the context of a greater whole. Citing here how Leinsle understands the thinking and understanding of Boethius of Dacia for the light that it can shed on how or why certain developments in our ways of thinking in science and philosophy could possibly lead to judgments of censure that would come to us from the Church's teaching office (in this case, as it was exercised at a local level, initially in Paris):

The *naturalis* (i.e., the philosopher who proceeds according to the principles of natural science) knows no truths of revelation, for example

determining its respective context), we should find upon further inquiry and investigation that, in fact, each implicitly or performatively relies or depends upon the other. Each influences or conditions the other in a way which refers to a distinct species of mutual causality or, in other words, a species of mutual priority that is operative (either way). In the groundedness of philosophy with respect to its points of origin, theological roots can be alluded to and discovered and, reciprocally, in the groundedness of theology with respect to the points of its origin, philosophical roots can be also discovered. As a conclusion that can be drawn: that which exists as a false philosophy points to that which exists as a false religion and, vice versa, that which exists as a false religion points to that which exists as a false philosophy.

---

*creatio ex nihilo* [creation from nothing]. It is not found among his principles and work methods. He can affirm or deny everything that he affirms or denies only “*ex causis et principiis naturalibus*” [“on the basis of natural causes and principles”]. If we heed this foundation, it follows that a thesis in natural science cannot be accepted as absolutely true; rather, if it contradicts the simple truth of revelation, it is false “*absolute accepta*” [“taken absolutely”], even though it is methodologically correct and has been derived logically from the limited principles of natural science. Therefore the truth of revelation, correctly interpreted, does not contradict natural science (philosophy), rightly understood. For the “*christianus subtiliter intelligens*” [“Christian who understands subtly”] recognizes that the truth of revelation is a matter of faith, whereas a thesis in natural science has been derived methodologically from the corresponding principles. And so he can keep both: “*salvat fidem et philosophiam neutram corripiendo*” [“He saves faith and philosophy, while wresting neither.”] Theologians and those in authority in the Church, however, who do not understand such difficult things, should listen to the wise man and abide by the law of Christ with the obedience of faith, knowing meanwhile that faith is not knowledge (*scientia*).

In other words, if we are bereft of subtle forms of thinking and reasoning, if certain distinctions are not alluded to and grasped, we will be tempted to think or to assume that a theory of double truth is being proposed or that it is somehow already operative, existing as an acceptable point of view which we should all regard as an inevitable, unavoidable, rational conclusion. That which is true in theology can be false in philosophy and vice versa. Alternatively, that which is true in science can be false in matters of faith and religion and vice versa. Cf. Pope Pius X, *Pascendi dominica gregis* [*Encyclical Letter on the Doctrines of the Modernists*], September 8, 1907, St. Paul Editions, p. 21. If the rule of contradiction says that A and not-A cannot both be true at the same time in the same manner, then, allegedly, the restrictions of this rule do not apply if we are referring to propositions or to expressions of truth which exist within separate domains. That which exists as a supernatural reality differs from that which exists as a natural reality and that which exists as an absolutely supernatural reality differs from that which exists as a relatively supernatural reality. However, from the viewpoint of the Church's Magisterium, if ways of thinking are emerging which would seem to point to separations which are to be tolerated between differing realms of knowledge and being (in this case, a separation between the work of theology and the work of philosophy), then this way of thinking will serve to detract from the influence of theology in terms of how it can function as a leaven in human culture

For example, if we should look at the kind of shift which we will find when we move from the metaphysics of Aristotle to the metaphysics of Aquinas, we should find that, in Aquinas, a metaphysics of act is articulated in a way which transcends an earlier metaphysics of form. Where, in Aristotle, the being of things is explained by the primacy of form (the entry of form or the reception of a form, form informing matter to give it a specific determination, converting that which is lacking to being to that which now is or exists), in Aquinas, because a real distinction exists between form and act, what a thing is versus whether or not it in fact exists (given the Christian doctrine of creation and belief in the contingency of everything which exists within our world), the being of things is explained more by act than by form (more by the primacy of act, the entry or reception of act, act functioning as a third species of metaphysical principle). We move from potency through form toward act. On the principle which says that a good philosophy gives life to any subsequent reflections that we would make in any given field of study, if we should work with a good philosophy, newer better theologies can emerge for us in ways which can shed a greater light on the meaning and truth of the Church's faith: its intelligibility and, from its meaningfulness, its reasonableness, its applicability, its truth. Hence, misjudgments in philosophy will only serve to obstruct and to thwart insights that could be enjoyed by us or anyone if, through our inquiries, we should move from science or philosophy into the practice and discipline of theology and the kind of inquiry which properly belongs to the work of theology.

If, for instance, mistaken understandings about the nature of our human cognition can lead to biased acts of thinking and reasoning within the kind of understanding which is the object and goal of inquiry within the practice of Catholic theology, then, obviously, if a theology is to be truly critical, if a theology is to exist as a scientific theology, it should know about the worth or the value of the kinds of philosophical arguments which are being used by it if it is to propose any teachings or understandings that are to be judged as worthy of belief or which would merit an assent which is entirely rational and reasonable (within the parameters of belief and faith) because its ground or basis is an apprehension of evidence which points to the likelihood or the probability of a truth that is now being known more fully and, in some way, believed. In another but similar way, misapprehensions with respect to matters of faith and morals will thwart insights that could be enjoyed within the practice and analysis of philosophy. If we should attend to the history of Greek religion in the classical period, with Xenophanes (d. c. 475 BC), an anthropomorphic conception of divine things (as this had existed within the traditional practices and beliefs of ancient Greek religion) is to be contrasted with a conception of

---

(existing as a source of meaning or as a point of reference for the kind of work that should be done within philosophy). The segregation of theology is a hazard which all good Christians would want to avoid if their faith is to inform how, as human beings, they are to think, understand, and live.

Undoubtedly, yes, the theory or the doctrine of a double truth is to be regarded as an abstraction. But, though it exists as an abstraction, it points to challenges which need to be met (questions which should be pursued) if continually, between the work of philosophy and the work of theology, a fruitful relation is to grow and expand in ways which can enlarge the depth and the range of our human understanding, suggesting new ways of living that would be more rational to the degree that they are informed by orders of meaning and being which exist at a higher level. As we look at what has been the history of philosophy and theology (their development through time), can we ask if any real developments can be encouraged within the kind of work which is done within the practice of philosophy and science apart from the reality of the Church's teaching and the order of truths which are presented within this teaching?

192Constant, p. 364.

193Constant, p. 354.

divine things which emphasizes perfections that are entirely absent from the play of human life although, with respect to divine things, these perfections can be identified in ways which could then point to a higher order of meaning and being and a radical form of transcendence which exclusively belongs to the things of God. Instead of being multiple, God is one; instead of being a projection of our human passions and desires, God is all good and all wise; instead of being an invisible kind of material thing or an immaterial kind of substance, God exists as pure spirit.

If then, within the teaching and the practice of the Christian faith, a dogmatic kind of realism is to be acknowledged (the truths of the faith point to realities which are not to be identified with correlatives which are measured by physical or material determinations), then, with the teaching and in the practice of philosophy, a critical kind of realism can be introduced into the realism of the Church's official teaching, giving to this teaching and to our apprehensions of belief and faith a greater precision or a finer exactness (discriminating nuances of meaning that can distinguish a greater number of variables that can all be linked together into a greater whole which can then serve as a point of departure for revitalizing a human understanding of values and truths that are constitutive of a given human culture, ordering very many parts and elements into a relation that is entirely directed toward the things of God: in some cases, seemingly creating a new human culture while, in other cases, refashioning a given culture in a way which radically transforms it from within). As a consequence of how the Church's Magisterium speaks about the truth of the Catholic faith (the absoluteness and the primacy of Christian truth), believers are encouraged to attend to the nature of truth, asking questions about it, reflecting more about it (determining its conditions), and then, from there, determining how, through combinations of philosophical and theological inquiry, an ordering of truths can be possibly determined in a way which would break from an attitude of resignation which is not able to think about how it would be possible to transcend contradictions and bifurcations that are readily presented to us whenever apprehensions of meaning are given to us within domains of thought that are delimited by the specific kinds of questions that are determinative for the existence of any given discipline.

### **Toward a Positive Understanding about the Powers of Unaided Human Reason**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in magisterial teachings which move from individual bishops and popes toward the teaching of the First Vatican Council in 1870, a change of context begins to point to a change of tactics as the Church's Magisterium begins to speak now about the unaided powers of human reason in a way which begins to move from a citation or a listing of negative judgments toward an affirmation and an articulation of positive judgments in a manner which specifies meanings (nuances of meaning) which are now more exact, manifesting differentiations which had not been known before or which had not been previously displayed in any kind of explicit way through the wording of any magisterial teaching. For example, in 1844, in the wake of established precedent, the Holy See initially lists and condemns a set of five errors that had been ascribed to the teaching of Louis Eugene Bautain (d. 1867), the first four of which recalls philosophical errors which had been condemned by the Church earlier in 1347 when Nicholas of Autrecourt had been required to subscribe to a condemnation of articles which, as condemnations, served indirectly to point to the authority and the power which properly belongs to the natural light of our human reason (our actuations of human reason apart from any receptions of grace that can work from within our acts of reasoning and understanding to elevate the level and the intensity of its activity and so to extend its range and influence). Hence, according to this Roman listing of unacceptable propositions, negatively speaking: it is wrong to claim that (1) "one cannot give a true proof for the existence of God by the light of rightly ordained reason only"; that (2) "by reason alone one cannot demonstrate the spirituality and immortality of the soul or any other purely natural, rational,

or moral truth”; that (3) “by reason alone one cannot have the knowledge of principles or metaphysics as well as of the truths that depend on them, a knowledge [that is] totally distinct from supernatural theology which is based on divine revelation”; and that (4) “reason cannot acquire a true and full knowledge of the motives of credibility, i.e., of those motives which make divine revelation evidently credible, such as especially the miracles and prophecies, and in particular the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>194</sup>

However, in an innovation which points to a development or a refinement in how the Church is expressing and communicating the content of her teaching (encouraging this practice, discouraging other practices), prior to the Roman censures of 1844, in 1835, in the diocese of Strasbourg in France, a list of positive affirmations is proffered, a list of positive affirmations which had been first drawn up by the aforementioned Louis Eugene Bautain at the behest of the local diocesan bishop (Bishop de Trévern) so that Bautain could then subscribe to the truth of the teachings that were contained within these positive affirmations. Later in Rome, in 1840, during the pontificate of Pope Gregory XVI, Bautain was made to subscribe to this same list of teachings although to a text that he had been able, slightly, to revise.<sup>195</sup> The wording of the teaching that is given in the diocesan text of 1835 reads as follows (as translated from the original French):

1. Reasoning can prove with certainty the existence of God [*Le raisonnement peut prouver avec certitude l'existence de Dieu*].<sup>196</sup>--Faith, a gift from heaven, is posterior to revelation; therefore, it cannot suitably be brought forward against an atheist as a proof of the existence of God. --2. The Mosaic revelation is proved with certainty by the oral and written tradition of the synagogue and of Christianity. --3. The proof of Christian revelation, drawn from the miracles of Jesus Christ, sensitive and striking for eyewitnesses, has not at all lost its strength and its brilliance for subsequent generations. We find this proof in the oral and written tradition of all Christians. It is by this double tradition that we should demonstrate it to those who reject it or who, without yet admitting it, desire it. --4. We have no right to expect an unbeliever to admit the resurrection of our Divine Savior before we have given him certain proofs of it; and these proofs are deduced from the same tradition by reasoning [*raisonnement*]. --5. The

---

<sup>194</sup>Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, “Five Theses subscribed by L. E. Bautain” (26 April 1844), as cited by Dupuis, p. 38, #101, #102, #103, and #104; Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 79, n. 59.

<sup>195</sup>“Faith and Reason (against Louis Eugene Bautain),” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 407, ft. 1; Ott, p. 15.

<sup>196</sup>Hendricus Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. Iohannes Bapt. Umberg (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder & Co., MCMXXXVII [1937]), p. 452, n. 1. I interject the wording of the French text within square brackets; I cite the French rendering of *raisonnement* since the use and meaning of this term does not exactly correspond with the use and meaning of *raison* that can be found elsewhere in the propositions that make up this text. *Raisonnement* refers to the activity of reasoning (the exact kind of thinking which exists in reasoning); *raison* refers to reason as that which engages in acts of reasoning. *Raison* exists as a subject; it is engaged in *raisonnement*. This difference is carried over into the Latin that is used in 1840 when the propositions of 1835 are rewritten (to a slight extent) and to which, again, Bautain gives his subscription although in a manner which is more solemn since it is given to a list of propositions that comes to us from the Magisterium of the Pope.

use of reason [*raison*] precedes faith and leads man to it by revelation and grace. --6. Reason [*raison*] can prove with certainty the authenticity of the revelation made to the Jews by Moses and to the Christians by Jesus Christ.<sup>197</sup>

Citing however the terms or the texts of these positive judgments as they were later amended and as they appeared in 1840: (1) “reason [as “reasoning”] can prove with certitude the existence of God [*ratiocinatio Dei existentiam cum certitudine probare valet*] and the infinity of His perfections...faith cannot be brought forward against an atheist to prove the existence of God”; (2) working with oral and written tradition as this comes to us from “the synagogue” and Christianity, the “divinity of the Mosaic revelation” can be “proved with certitude”; (3) “proof drawn from the miracles of Jesus Christ sensible and striking for eyewitnesses, has in no way lost its force and splendor as regards subsequent generations...this proof [is found] with all certitude in the authenticity of the New Testament, in the oral and written tradition of all Christians”...[hence] we can demonstrate the truth of revelation by “this double tradition...to those who either reject it or, who, not having admitted it, are searching for it”; (4) “we do not have the right to expect from the unbeliever that he admit the resurrection of our divine Savior before we shall have proposed definite proofs to him; and these proofs are deduced by reason from the same tradition”; (5) “in regard to these various questions, reason precedes faith and should lead us to it”; and (6) “although reason was rendered weak and obscure by original sin, yet there remained in it sufficient clarity and power to lead us with certitude to a knowledge of the existence of God, to the revelation made to the Jews by Moses, and to Christians by our adorable Man-God.”<sup>198</sup> Where, in 1713, Pope Clement XI had condemned a proposition which had averred that “all knowledge of God, even natural knowledge, even in the pagan philosophers, cannot come except from God; and without grace knowledge produces nothing but presumption, vanity, and opposition to God Himself, instead of the affections of adoration, gratitude, and love,”<sup>199</sup> now in 1840, it is being said in Rome that “*ratiocinatio* [reasoning] can prove with certitude the existence of God and the infinity of His perfections” and that, despite the effects and consequences of Original sin, in reason “there remained...sufficient clarity and power to lead us with certitude to a knowledge of the existence of God.”

To explain a bit more about why it can be said that the consequences of Original sin are not entirely fatal for us as human beings and why we can speak about the legitimacy and indeed the power of our unaided human intellect (and why an entirely skeptical view about the nature of our human cognition is to be rejected):

---

197Louis Eugene Bautain, “Six Theses subscribed by L. E. Bautain,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 408, ft. 1.

198See Bautain, “Theses written by Bautain under order of this bishop, Sept. 8, 1840,” *Sources*, pp. 407-408, #1622-1627. Please note that, to some extent, I have qualified the translation of *ratiocinatio* by inserting “reasoning” into square brackets after the reference to “reason.” *Ratiocinatio* is to be distinguished from *ratio*. *Ratiocinatio* refers to our acts of human reasoning; *ratio*, to the faculty or the subject of our reasoning activity. Our *ratio* is engaged in *ratiocinatio*. Although the expression “deductive reasoning” has been used as a translation for *ratiocinatio*, I doubt the usefulness of this translation since questions can arise about the meaning of the deduction that is being intended or suggested within this context. See Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, p. 21, for a translation of *ratiocinatio* that refers to “deductive reasoning.”

199Pope Clement XI, *Unigenitus*, as cited by the *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 349-350, #1391.

It can be said or it is alleged by some, as “certain [indubitable] Church doctrine,”<sup>200</sup> that a condition or a state of pure nature is to be admitted with respect to the condition or the state of our human nature (in Latin, a *status naturae purae*). While, in ordinary or common Church teaching, it seems that we can find references which speak about an elevated nature, a fallen nature, and a restored nature, the same Magisterium, in one way or another, would also seem to teach and speak about the existence of a state of pure nature: nature as distinct from God and the things of God and this nature as distinct also from any possible reception of graces which could possibly come to it from God as special gifts that are imparted by him.<sup>201</sup> Again, at this point, we prescind from entering

---

200Ott, p. 106.

201Ott, p. 106. Please note, at this point, in the absence of primary sources and the kind of verification which exists in primary sources, that I must speak with a degree of caution and reserve. In the discussion which comes to us from Ludwig Ott in his *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, no references are given to magisterial texts which would directly refer to the being of a state of pure nature that would be officially taught although, as we think about this issue and thesis, we can believe that, amongst many Catholics (among many theologians and possibly among many bishops in the context of their thinking and speaking given that, in the context of their prior education, bishops have received some kind of philosophical and theological training), we can often find language and ways of speaking which would seem to refer in different ways to that which allegedly exists as pure nature in conjunction with language and ways of speaking which would seem also to refer to that which exists as prelapsarian nature, fallen nature, restored nature, and elevated nature. In the context of the ordinary and the common kind of teaching authority which belongs to the Church's Magisterium as she speaks about the being of very many things in an informal kind of way on a day to day basis, things are said and truths are sometimes taught in a manner that tends to be lacking in a species of formal definition which would come from more formal exercises of Church teaching authority that are given in the context of conciliar decrees and in dogmatic decisions and declarations that are issued, at different times, by popes who wish to declare the beliefs of the Church that are to be held by all Christians).

Moving on however, as a counter to this aforementioned kind of language and the connotations that are suggested by a use of language which refers to the being of a pure nature, it can be said that, if we should allege that, before sin, Adam and Eve had natures that were entirely pure and unblemished (they are bereft of any stain or weight of sin), at the same time however we cannot presume and argue that, in their thinking and understanding, both therefore must have had a natural knowledge of God that would have been fully adequate for them: a knowledge that would have entirely satisfied any desires which they would have had for a knowledge of God that would have been complete and satisfactory since, for both Adam and Eve, the absence of a need for any kind of restorative, healing grace does not preclude or exclude a need for an uplifting or an elevating kind of grace that is able to take their understanding of divine things and then raise it or promote in into a knowledge of God which would have existed as a species of proper knowledge if we should attend to a kind of desire in Adam and Eve which wants to know God in terms of how he exists in himself and not in terms of how he resembles something other which perhaps they have understood and known on the basis of an interaction which exists between their acts of human sensing and their acts of understanding (the kind of understanding and knowing which belongs to all of us as human beings). In our understanding and knowing of things, apart or in contrast with the being of any kind of metaphysical identity, in a cognitional manner, a knower is always joined to the being of an object as this object is known by us through its



into a discussion which would specify what exactly a nature is in terms of how it is to be understood and how it is to be conceived. At this point, we prefer to work only with meanings which exist as explanatory concepts and which vary as concepts as we distinguish one explanatory concept from another explanatory concept. This term or concept is not this other term or concept. Hence, within this context: despite the woundedness which allegedly exists for us and in us as a consequence of the evil of sin (sin as Original sin), it is said that our human nature has not been completely corrupted, destroyed, or undermined.<sup>202</sup> Our free will is hampered but it has “not [been] lost or extinguished.”<sup>203</sup> The reasonableness or the rationality of our human reason is such that, amid problems and difficulties, it continues to exist and to endure (despite all the ill

---

intelligibility. Act and term exist together. Hence, if Adam and Eve exist as creatures and if God exists in an uncreated way, can we argue (apart from sin or any questions about sin and the consequences of sin) that Adam and Eve were bereft of any kind of need or help which would have existed for them through the administration and the reception of a grace which exists as a species of elevating grace? In real terms (or factually speaking), can a sinless created being or, more to the point, does a sinless created being succeed in having a fully adequate and satisfactory understanding and knowledge of divine things that would exist for them in a way which is distinct and which would be apart from any kind of help or assistance which would exist at a supernatural level, coming as it would from a supernatural source and so existing as a species of supernatural understanding? If, in another sense, or if, on the other hand, we should refer to a natural knowledge of God that is commensurate with the kind of human knowing which exists for us in terms of an interaction which always exists between our human acts of sensing and our human acts of understanding, is this knowledge not in fact, by its very nature and our experience of it, a somewhat limited thing? And is it not true that the experience of limitation which is given to us here at the same time serves as a stimulus; it points us toward an unimaginable kind of fulfillment which would have to exceed the kind of order or the kind of proportion which belongs to us, given the contingent kind of knowing which belongs to us in the exercise and the experience of our human cognition? We distinguish between a proper object which exists as the term of our cognitional desires and a proper object which is the term of our cognitive operations as these belong to us as human beings and as they differ from the kind of cognition that belongs to other beings. Cf. Bernard Lonergan, “The Natural Desire to See God,” *Collection*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 82.

To state our question and case in another way, when we speak about a state of pure nature, are we speaking about something which exists as a thing or a substance or are we speaking about something which exists as an explanatory theorem, an explanatory hypothesis, an explanatory concept, or as an explanatory principle? An explanatory theorem, an explanatory hypothesis, an explanatory concept, or an explanatory principle has a reality of its own and a power which points to a significance that is rational and persuasive. Once grasped, it exists for us as a new ordering principle for an ordering that leads us toward an apprehension of new distinctions that, previously, we had not known and so, by its application and use, a larger experience of reality is given to us. The reality that we know exists either as a differentiated thing or as more differentiated thing. It encompasses a larger number of variables and it points to graces that we had not known about too clearly or distinctly (graces that had been known in a somewhat confused way).

If we should think then about how we can speak about a pure nature which applies to the being of Adam and Eve (and if we should also want to think about a pure nature which could apply to

influences that come to us from the kind of interference which exists in the play of “prejudice or passion or bad faith”).<sup>204</sup>

Using our natural powers of human cognition, without the necessity of the kind of help that could be given to us in grace, according to the judgment of the Church's Magisterium, as simply a possibility or as a capacity which belongs to us as a potency, “man...can with certainty know the existence of God.”<sup>205</sup> *Ratiocinatio potest cum certitudine probare existentiam Dei.*<sup>206</sup> This statement is not to be equated with one which would say that “man with certainty knows the existence of God.” Through the exact kind of thinking which we *can have* within our reasoning activity, in the context of our human cognition, with necessity or through a rational kind of compulsion which exists within our reasoning activity, as a kind of potency, it is possible for us we can prove the being of God's existence in a manner which is certain. In words that, later,

---

ourselves as human beings), while we can think about a nature that has not been corrupted by sin, in the case of Adam and Eve (like ourselves), at the same time with respect to Adam and Eve, we cannot speak about their nature in a way which points to its constancy or stability. The “pure nature” of Adam and Eve exists as an abstraction. It exists as an ideality as we begin to realize that, in different persons, in the context of their concrete lives, it exists as a kind of more or less: having a realization that is never full or complete but always existing in a partial or in a limited way in a way which points to how this “pure nature” exists as a kind of property or accident and not as a kind of substance or thing. It exists in varying degrees amongst us as human beings and, so too, it exists in a varying or different degree if we should refer to the personal histories of Adam and Eve and what we happen to know about them in the accounts which we have received about them through the mediation of scripture and the kind of reception that has been given to them by the Church, through her teachings and the kind of mediation which exists in the faith and the belief which she professes.

202Ott, p. 112; Pope Pius IX, “False Freedom of Science (against James Frohschammer),” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 421, #1670, which refers to our “human reason” as “darkened...by the guilt of the first man” but which is “by no means extinct.”

203Ott, p. 113, citing a teaching that was proclaimed by the Council of Trent.

204Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, [1950]), p. 4, #4; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 15, as cited by John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 82. In words which come to us from the later teaching of Pope Paul VI in the *Osservatore Romano*, 2 June 1972 (as cited by Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 337), in rejecting skeptical views about the nature and the powers of our human cognition, he says and claims that “we are the only ones who defend the power of reason.” Along the same lines, in a later exegesis of the magisterial teaching of Pope John Paul II as this was given in an encyclical, *Fides et ratio*, that was issued in September 1998, it is said about this teaching that Pope John Paul II “asserted strong claims, in a skeptical postmodern age, for the powers of reason.” Cf. Robert Royal, *A Deeper Vision: The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), p. 32.

205Ott, p. 113, citing a teaching that was proclaimed by the First Vatican Council in 1870. See also Bernard Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” *A Second Collection*, eds. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 100.

206Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, “Faith and Reason against Louis Eugene Bautain (September 8, 1840),” as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 407, #1622; Sacred Congregation of the Index, “Decree on False Traditionalism against Augustine Bonnetty (1855),” as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 417, #1650; Ott, pp. 14-15.

were employed by the Church's Magisterium in a more solemn way in 1870 in the context of the First Vatican Council, it is said that “God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the things that were created, through the natural light of human reason,<sup>207</sup> for 'ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made' [*Romans* 1:20].”<sup>208</sup> Truths about divine things that “are *not beyond human reason* can, even in the present condition of humankind, be known by everyone with facility, with firm certitude and with no admixture of error.”<sup>209</sup> Italics mine. In conjunction with faith and an order of knowledge which exists in the light of faith, in the existence of our human reason or in reason, we have a first principle which grounds the being of a distinct order of knowledge: a reason which is delimited if we should speak about the being of our “natural reason” and about how it is able to know truths that belong to a proportionate

---

207Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” *Second Collection*, p. 106, for an interpretation about what exists as the “natural light of human reason”: an interpretation which refers to a philosophy of human cognition which points to the nature of our human cognition (apart from the being and the possible influence of other variables which could direct or impede how we could be functioning within the concrete of things in the context and in the manner of our human cognition). Normatively speaking, when we refer to *a posteriori* apprehensions of being: we begin with our acts of human sensing and these are succeeded by our acts of direct understanding which, in turn, are succeeded by our acts of reflective understanding as we move from the givens of our sense experience and, through our questions, then ask about the what and the why of things toward later questions which can ask about the truth a given thesis which exists initially for us as a bright idea and, later, as a conceptualized hypothesis. An experience of data in sense is followed by the experience of an idea within our understanding and then, from this, the experience of a fact or the experience of a truth which has been grasped by us through a reflective act of understanding which would exist for us as an act of judgment. If we accordingly take this teaching about the “natural light of human reason” and if we situate it within the later context of the later repetitions that were given of this teaching in the wake of the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in 1879 (in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*), we have a basis for saying that, in an indirect way or implicitly, the Church's Magisterium understands the “natural light of human reason” in a way which reflects the philosophy of human cognition which comes to us initially from the earlier thought of Aristotle, albeit, in the context of the kind of redaction and use that comes to us through the mediation which exists if we attends to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and the kind of language which he uses in order to point to how, within us as human beings, there exists a form of self-transcendence which exists within the manner of our cognition. For an articulation of this understanding of self in a way which reflects the kind of traditional teaching that exists for us from the thought and the words and concepts of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas but according to a manner which points to a philosophy of interiority as this exists for us in the later thought of Fr. Bernard Lonergan SJ (d. 1984), see James B. Reichmann's *Philosophy of the Human Person* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1985). In the Church's explicit teaching, bits and pieces can be reconciled with an Aristotelian understanding of human cognition although, on the basis of the Church's implicit teaching, much more can be known about the kind of spirit which belongs to the nature of human inquiry, a spirit which points to the “natural light of our human reason.” Cf. Robert Royal, *A Deeper Vision: The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), p. 33.

208First Vatican Council, “Constitution on the Catholic Faith,” or *Dei Filius* (1870), as cited by Dupuis, p. 43, #113.

209*Dei Filius*, as cited by Dupuis, p. 43, #114.

order of things which exists as the proper object of our “natural reason.”<sup>210</sup> Similarly or consequently, in 1950, in his encyclical letter *Humani generis*, Pope Pius XII taught that, “by its own natural power and light,” our natural human reason *can attain* to a “true and certain knowledge of the one personal God” and, at the same time too, this same power can attain “to a true and certain knowledge...of the natural law, which the Creator has written in our hearts.”<sup>211</sup> Italics mine. In a repetition that, to some extent, echoes the teaching of Pope Pius XII, in 1959 Pope John XXIII taught that “God gave each of us an intellect [that is] capable of attaining natural truth...it is possible for us to attain natural truth by virtue of our intellects.”<sup>212</sup>

In 1997, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in a reiteration of traditional teaching, it is said that “the one true God, our Creator and Lord, *can be known* with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human reason” and that this is true “even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error;”<sup>213</sup> a teaching which is again reiterated in 1998 if we should turn to the teaching of Pope John Paul II in *Fides et ratio* which notes that, apart from faith, “human reason...by its nature *can know* the Creator...God comes to us in the things we know best and can verify most easily, the things of our everyday life, apart from which we cannot understand ourselves.”<sup>214</sup> Italics mine.

As Pope Pius XII had noted earlier back in 1950 in *Humani generis*, the basis or the necessary prerequisite for having this kind of knowledge is a mode of inquiry and reason that is grounded in the arts (or in the methodology) of a “sound philosophy”: one which “protects the true and sincere value of human understanding [*verum sincerumque cognitionis humanae valorem*], and constant metaphysical principles – namely, of sufficient reason, causality, and finality – and finally, the acquisition of certain and

---

210First Vatican Council, “Chapter IV on Faith and Reason,” *Dei Filius*, as cited by <http://www.catholicplanet.org/councils/20-Dei-Filius.htm> (accessed November 6, 2017).

Subsequently, this teaching was reiterated in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council where, in *Gaudium et Spes*, 59, through a reiteration of earlier teaching which has come to us earlier from Pope Pius XI in 1931 (from his encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*), it is said by the Second Vatican Council that, in lieu of the role of reason for us in the conduct of our human cognition, “the Church does not forbid that 'the human arts and disciplines use their own principles and their proper method, each in its own domain;' therefore 'acknowledging this just liberty,' this Sacred Synod affirms the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences.” Cf. *Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, p. 170, # 59.

211Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, [1950]), p. 3, #2; p. 13, #29.

212Pope John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram* [Encyclical Letter On Truth Unity and Peace], 8 ([http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_29061959\\_ad-petri.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_29061959_ad-petri.html)) (accessed September 27, 2017). According to an alternative translation: “God has given us a mind capable of discovering the law of nature...we can attain to natural truths by the light of reason alone.” Cf. John XXIII, *Encyclicals of Pope John XXIII* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), p. 5, #4-5.

213*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), p. 18, #46; p. 75, #286.

214Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 8; 12.

immutable truth [*certam et immutabilem veritatis assecutionem*].<sup>215</sup> It derives from “principles and notions [that have been] deduced from a true knowledge of created things”<sup>216</sup> in a way which explains why the Church cannot subscribe to any “system of philosophy that has existed for a short space of time,”<sup>217</sup> philosophies which exist as fashionable options of one kind or another amongst other possible options and choices in a manner which, in some way, points to how these philosophies are not too well grounded in “principles and methods” that are essential to the practice of philosophy as a species of rational activity which is endemic to the activity and the nature of our human reason.<sup>218</sup> As the Second Vatican Council was to note later in the teaching that it gave in *Gaudium et Spes*: in the manner of our human cognition, no one escapes censure

---

215Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* [#29], as cited by *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 643, # 2320; partially cited also by Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum: A Study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the XXth Century*, trans. John P. Parsons (Kansas City, MO: Sarto House, 2012), p. 337, citing Denzinger, 2320. In 1998, in his encyclical *Fides et ratio*, 4, Pope John Paul II similarly refers to the principles of causality and finality, and in conjunction with the principle of non-contradiction (which is sometimes referred to as the principle of contradiction), he refers to the centrality of these principles within the conduct of inquiry within philosophy and, implicitly, their centrality within the conduct of any kind of human inquiry which would pretend to be thoughtfully serious and attentive. These principles all belong to a kind of “core” which exists within the acquisition of understanding within the reception of “philosophical insight” (within the kind of understanding which comes to us from the kind of self-scrutiny and understanding which exists for us within the practice of philosophy) and, if these principles are applied in conjunction with other principles which refer to the nature of our human existence and the kind of moral life which properly belongs to us as human beings, the result should be a flowering and a manifestation of our human inquiry, reflection, and reason in a way which would exist for us as the use and the being of *right reason*.

216Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis*, p. 8, #16.

217Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis*, p. 8, #16.

218Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 49. Please note that, in order to explain more fully the earlier teaching of Pope Pius XII that comes to us in 1950, I have leaped ahead and have drawn from later teaching as this comes to us from Pope John Paul II in his encyclical of 1998. In *Fides et ratio*, however, we find an initial articulation of teaching that seems to clash with prior, traditional teaching about philosophical positions and judgments which Church favors and which she proposes as a “sound philosophy” which is always to be preferred if we are to reject errant teachings that can come to us from other philosophies (teachings which cannot be reconciled with the truth of the Church's Catholic faith). Citing the proposition in question that we initially find in *Fides et ratio*, 49: “The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others.” As it stands, this proposition cannot be squared with other teachings that can be found in other sections and propositions of the Pope's encyclical, *Fides et ratio*. However, since this proposition is given with a footnote reference to earlier teaching which exists in the teaching of Pope Pius XII in his encyclical, *Humani generis*, the teaching that we find in *Humani generis* contextualizes the aforementioned teaching that we find in the later teaching of *Fides et ratio*, 49. From the viewpoint of this earlier context, we can argue that the proscriptions of *Fides et ratio*, 49 refer to philosophies that are lacking in the kind of rational grounding which should belong to them if we should think about the kind of order which belongs to the nature of our human cognition and how our acts of sense are ordered to acts of understanding which are not lacking in the self-understanding that is needed if we are to determine the truth of any propositions that are given to us (in whatever context): determining here the

who decides that it is not possible to know something which would exist as an “absolute truth.”<sup>219</sup> The nature of our human intelligence is such that it “is not confined to observable data alone. It can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable,”<sup>220</sup> through a shift in our cognitive consciousness which moves from the initial givens of our “sense perception and experience” and then from there, move toward truth “by the light of the intellect alone”<sup>221</sup> since, by its nature and through its operation, reason is “oriented to truth and [it] “is equipped moreover with the means [that are] necessary to arrive at truth.”<sup>222</sup>

Through our self-knowledge thus, by attending to our interior, inner conditions, “man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind.”<sup>223</sup> Our understanding and judgment exists as a kind of participation in the understanding and judgment which is to be equated with God, God who exists in himself as an unrestricted act of understanding and judgment. Subsequently, according the teaching of Pope John Paul II in *Fides et ratio*, it belongs to the mission and to the task of philosophy that it should work toward an understanding of the understanding which we each have of ourselves as human beings, given the necessity of the kind of knowledge which exists for us as self-understanding if, as a requirement in the work that we do in philosophy, we are to “verify the human capacity to *know the truth*, [in order] to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of the [notion and the principle of the] *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which [formerly] the Scholastic doctors [had] referred.”<sup>224</sup> In other words, if the truth of a thing is to be known, “the intellect (of the knower) must be adequate to the thing (that is known by the knower).”<sup>225</sup> Knowing occurs through an identity or a conformity which

---

extent that an identity or that a conformity exists between ourselves as knowing subjects and whatever exists as a known object. When, subsequently in *Fides et ratio*, 49, it is said that “reason is by its nature oriented to truth and [that it] is equipped moreover with the means necessary to arrive at truth,” a philosophical position is being stated (and chosen; a philosophical position is reaffirmed) since, in the history of philosophy and in the context of our own day and time, contrary points of view can be found which point to a skeptical attitude about the powers of our human cognition, denying to us, in our understanding, a species of self-transcendence which points to how we can move toward a true knowledge of an objective order of existing things.

219Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 338, citing from *Gaudium et Spes*, 19.

220Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 15, as cited by *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott, p. 213. This same teaching is reiterated by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical of 1998, *Fides et ratio*, 83, although within a context which speaks about the need for a metaphysics (cited as “a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical range*”) that is “capable...of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”

221Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 9.

222Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 49.

223Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 15, as cited by *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott, p. 212.

224John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 82. In terms of documentation that can refer to the teaching of Scholastic theologians, the Pope refers to St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 1 and St. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, 3, 8, 1.

225Please note that I adapt a translation that I take from an online dictionary of spiritual terms

emerges or which exists between a knower and an object or a thing that is known.<sup>226</sup>

Expanding more fully then on the positive teaching that comes to us in 1846 from *Qui pluribus*, a papal encyclical, within this encyclical Pope Pius IX summarizes the truth of the positive teaching that is given about the role of our human reason as it differs from how faith functions within the context of our human lives: “*right reason* [our human reasoning, our human cognition as it should exist and as it manifests itself]<sup>227</sup> demonstrates the truth of faith, protects it, [and] defends it.”<sup>228</sup> Our reason, normatively speaking, serves our life of faith even as, at the same time too, our faith serves our reason (assisting it, encouraging it, perfecting it) given the fact that, as revealed, “our holy religion was not invented by human reason...[and] “that this religion receives all its strength from the authority of God

---

(cf. <http://www.dictionaryofspiritualterms.com/public/Glossaries/terms.aspx?ID=424>, accessed September 28, 2017) although other translations have been given of these Latin terms. One translation speaks about “the equation of thought and thing”; another, “the equalizing of the thing and the mind.” Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, translating the Latin that is given in the *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 1; and St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 1, trans. Thomas Gornall, S.J. In another instance, in his book on *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2005), p. 90, in order to speak about how our human knowledge and reality are to be related to each other with respect to what Aquinas says about the nature of our human cognition, Neil Ormerod speaks about “the adequacy of knowledge to reality.” One leads to the other through a kind of self-transcendence which belongs to our cognition in a manner which allows it to be joined to things which are other than itself (things which exist apart from whether or not they are being understood by us through an act of understanding which belongs us as a knowing human subject).

In order to explain what is meant by the adequacy of our human cognition, it is accordingly alleged that, in Aquinas, through our acts of understanding (through those acts of understanding which are to be identified with our acts of reflective understanding and the self-understanding which exists in our reflective acts of understanding), a proportion can be known to exist between our human cognitive acts, on the one hand, and what is known by us through our human cognitive acts, on the other hand. See here Edward M. Mackinnon, “Understanding according to Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.,” *The Thomist* 28 (1964): 105-106. A conformity or an identity can be known to exist between the knowing of a human subject (given through the knowing of a particular truth) and something which is particular which belongs to the class or the order of real things or the order of real objects which exist within the world. Or, in the words of Bernard Lonergan in his understanding of Aquinas: “Truth is not given apart from an affirming mind... Truth is not given apart from the subject pondering the evidence, rationally judging, and reasonably believing.” Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works on Theological Method 3*, trans. Michael Shields, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 5. See also Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1235, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 66, 5; *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 2; q. 17, a. 2 on why acts of sense are not able to know if a conformity exists between any knowing that belongs to us as human subjects and what our senses sense within their activity.

Through our acts of reflective understanding which grasp and affirm a truth, something real begins to live within us in our knowing as human subjects. The order of our human knowing participates in an objectively existing order of things (signified alternatively as the order of being or the the order of reality) since our human cognition consists of an order of different acts which, together, in

who speaks to us, and can never be deduced or perfected by [our] human reason.”<sup>229</sup> Where faith works with a knowledge of “divine things,” philosophy is more limited in what it knows and how it functions. As a good, it works with a knowledge of mundane things that can only be known through a focus that “is totally engaged in the investigation of natural truth [the kind of truth which is proportionate to the kind of inquiry which exists within the human practice of science and philosophy].”<sup>230</sup> In the same vein, in an allocution that comes to us in 1854 from Pope Pius IX: “very foolishly” does one think if one should hold that human reason is to be regarded as “equal to religion itself.”<sup>231</sup> Most properly, citing St. Paul and 2 Corinthians 10:5, “the power of our intellect...should be made captive unto the obedience of faith.”<sup>232</sup> Philosophy and human reason are to be regarded as “wholly handmaidens.”<sup>233</sup>

---

their combination, lead a person into a knowledge of reality. Reality is known not extrinsically or externally through our acts of sensing but through an experience of intelligibility or intellectuality and through mediating acts of understanding which reveal the workings of an operative intelligence. Hence, if reality is only known through intelligibility (which functions as a kind of first principle within cognition), it accordingly follows that reality itself is inherently intelligible. It exists through its intrinsic intelligibility. Whatever is lacking in intelligibility would be lacking in reality. The measure of all claims to reality is determined by the presence or the absence of intelligibility – the presence or absence of rationality. From the adequacy of our human knowing to reality comes the intelligibility of reality (from the viewpoint of our cognitional perspective) although, on the other hand, from a metaphysical perspective, we can also argue that, from the intelligibility of reality, we can conclude that the order of our human knowing is such that it naturally leads us to a true knowledge of reality (a true knowledge of existing things). Reality or the order of real things does not elude us in terms of the grasp which we can possibly have of it. The truth of things is not something which is essentially unknowable although admittedly, in terms of acts or deeds as this exists amongst us as human beings, it seems that, for some persons, the truth of things is something which cannot be known.

226 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 21, citing Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

227 For an initial understanding of *right reason* as this would exist for us from the context of an earlier negative approach that has existed within the order of the Church's official teaching, a teaching comes to us from Pope Alexander VIII when, in a decree of the Holy Office (dated August 24, 1690), it is noted that, if we should work with the theological conceptuality which we have when we refer to the existence of sin (sin as a genus or a species of human action which would refer to the commission of culpable human actions), on this basis then, if we should refer to the human order of things and then to the divine order of things and a real difference which distinguishes these two orders from each other, we can accordingly distinguish between two different kinds of sin: philosophical sins in the human order of things and theological sins in the divine order of things. Philosophical sins do not exist as “free transgressions of divine law” although, on the other hand, theological sins exist as this species of human transgression. Philosophical or “moral sins” refer to “human acts” which “do not agree with rational nature and right reason.” They exist as faults or as sins which human beings can commit against themselves or against the created order of things: hence, hurting themselves or others, since, within this context, according to Pope Alexander VIII, a “philosophical sin” is to be regarded as “grievous” in the degree of its wrongfulness and also in its evil consequences although on the other hand, technically speaking, it is “not an offence against God.” The hurt is principally directed by human beings against themselves in how they exist and live as human beings. A philosophical or a moral sin does not exist as “a mortal sin which breaks off...friendship with God and deserves eternal



“They should be wholly handmaidens, not masters in religious matters.”<sup>234</sup> “[C]reated reason is completely subject to uncreated truth.”<sup>235</sup>

In matters of religion [thus] it is the duty of philosophy not to command but to serve, not to prescribe what is to be believed, but to embrace what is to be believed with reasonable obedience, not to scrutinize the depths of the mysteries of God, but to venerate them devoutly and humbly.<sup>236</sup>

Our human reason thus, as right reason, always serves the interests of the true faith and, at the same time too, through a kind of mutual help which exists with respect to how reason and faith relate to each

---

punishment.” Cf. Dupuis, p. 787, #2008/2. Philosophical sins occur in persons apart from any kind of relation with God. Philosophical sins are committed by persons who “do not know God” or who “do not actually think of God.” In the conceptuality that we find in this teaching, a theological term is used as an analogy in order to speak about privations which exist within a natural order of things as this applies to us as human beings apart from how, as human beings, we would be consciously relating to the being and the goodness of God. For a later reference to the meaning and being of *right reason*, see Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 4 where here, in the context of this encyclical, the goodness of *right reason* is explained in terms of conditions that must be met if, indeed, our human reason is to exist as *right reason* within the conduct of our human inquiries. In our thinking and our understanding of things, we observe the principle of non-contradiction; in our inferences, we look for how we can move from effects to causes (how causes exist to explain other things which exist as effects); and in our understanding of conditions which exist as developments, we attend to how in developments and changes, finalities are to be identified. A right understanding of *right reason* points to a normative understanding about how we should exist as human beings (who we are as human beings) and also to a normative understanding about how we should exist and live as human beings.

228Pope Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846, *Sources*, p. 410, #1635, citing the full text: “even if faith is above reason, nevertheless, no true dissension or disagreement can ever be found between them, since both have their origin from one and the same font of immutable, eternal truth, the excellent and great God, and they mutually help one another so much that right reason demonstrates the truth of faith, protects it, [and] defends it.” In veritably the same words, in 1855, the Sacred Congregation of the Index repeats this teaching of Pope Pius IX: “although faith is above reason, nevertheless no true dissension, no disagreement can ever be found between them, since both arise from the one same immutable source of truth, the most excellent and great God, and thus bring mutual help to each other.” Cf. “False Traditionalism (against Augustine Bonnetty),” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 416, #1649. This same teaching is again later repeated when, in 1870, in *Dei filius*, the First Vatican Council teaches about the lack of variance which exists between our divine faith and our human reason “since the same God, who reveals mysteries and infuses faith, has bestowed on the human soul the light of reason; moreover God cannot deny Himself, nor ever contradict truth with truth.” Cf. First Vatican Council, “Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 41, #1635.

229Pope Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846, Dupuis, p. 40, #108.

230Pope Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846, Dupuis, p. 39, #106. Please note that, within square brackets, I have added words which attempt to explain how, within this context, “natural truth” is to be interpreted and understood. Instead of simply referring to philosophy, I choose to refer to “science and philosophy” on the basis of an assumption which would hold that the traditional meaning of philosophy is probably being intended by the Pope Pius IX, the traditional meaning of

other, the faith that we have which comes to us from God assists and builds our human reasoning and understanding in a way which perfects and enhances its various activities and differing, complementary operations.<sup>237</sup>

Some of these aforementioned points about the role and the competence of human reason were then compactly reproduced and restated in 1855 when a decree of the Roman Sacred Congregation of the Index spoke about the nature of our reasoning power in a way which refers to a kind of autonomy which legitimately belongs to it (our reasoning power as it functions apart from the help of grace that could come to us from God as Savior and Redeemer although not apart from the kind of help that would come to us from God as the Creator and the First Principle of all things which happen to exist

---

philosophy referring to a species of inquiry which had not yet distinguished between the practice of philosophy, on the one hand, versus the practice of science, on the other hand (the separation and differentiation of these two disciplines being a later development that has been accredited to the new kind of science that was first practiced by Galileo Galilei in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century in the context of inquiries which he was conducting to understand the nature or the intelligibility of the free fall of falling objects, falling near the surface of the earth). If the study of data, as data are given to us through our acts of sense, elicits a mode of inquiry which is more suited to the kind of given that exists for us through the extroversion which belongs to our human acts of sensing, in attempting to study the kind of data that exists for us through the introversion which belongs to our self-experience, another mode of inquiry is suggested to us as a more likely, fruitful approach. Science emerges in a manner which differs from the nature of philosophical inquiry although, in both cases (albeit in differing ways), our acts of human reasoning are always governed by critical requirements that are endemic to the nature of human reason: if we should choose to move toward judgments and conclusions that are grounded in the availability of evidence that can be experienced by other persons if they should desire to experience any measures of verification that can be individually and personally known by us within the data of our conscious experience. From a viewpoint which is determined by exercises of papal teaching authority, an awareness of how natural science differs from the kind of inquiry which belongs to philosophy (and theology) appears to surface for the first time in 1880 (March 7) in the context of a papal allocution that was delivered by Pope Leo XIII when he urged as follows with respect to the pursuit of “secular studies” (as cited by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi dominica gregis* [*On the Doctrines of the Modernists*], p. 58):

Apply yourselves energetically to the study of natural sciences: in which department the things that have been so brilliantly discovered, and so usefully applied, to the admiration of the present age, will be the object of praise and commendation to those who come after us.

231Pope Pius IX, *Singulari quadam*, papal allocution on “Rationalism and Indifferentism,” December 9, 1854, as cited by the *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 414, #1642. Consequently, in the listing of the *Syllabus of Errors*, which was issued in 1864, no credence is to be given to the proposition that “since human reason is equal to religion itself, therefore, theological studies must be conducted just as the philosophical.” Cf. *Sources*, p. 436, #1708. It follows from this too that no credence is to be ascribed to a thesis which says that “all the dogmas of the Christian religion without distinction are the object of natural science or philosophy; and human reason, cultivated so much throughout history, can by its natural powers and principles arrive at the true knowledge of all, even the more hidden dogmas, provided these dogmas have been proposed to reason itself as its object.” Cf. *Sources*, p. 436, #1709. In the reiteration that comes to us in 1870 from the teaching of the First

and which, in some way, continue to depend on him for their sustenance, their being and life).<sup>238</sup>  
Hence:

Reason [through our reasoning we]<sup>239</sup> can prove with certitude the existence of God [*ratiocinatio cum certitudine probare valet*], the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of man. Faith is posterior to revelation, and hence it cannot be conveniently alleged to prove the existence of God to an atheist, or to prove the spirituality and the freedom of the rational soul against a follower of naturalism and fatalism.<sup>240</sup>

As had been noted in the affirmations of 1835 and 1840, it is said here too in 1855 that “the use of

---

Vatican Council in *Dei filius*: “reason never becomes capable of apprehending mysteries as it does those truths which constitute its proper object.” Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Church*, p. 36. Hence, according to a regulatory and disciplinary canon, “if any one shall say tht in divine revelation there are no mysteries, truly and properly so-called, but that all the doctrines of faith can be understood and demonstrated from natural principles, by properly cultivated reason.” Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Church*, p. 40. In the same vein, in a manner which points to a difference in grounds and mode of procedure, according to a second canon, the First Vatican Council teaches that “if any one shall say [that] divine faith is not distinguished from natural knowledge of God and of moral truths, and therefore that it is not requisite for divine faith that revealed truth be believed because of the authority of God who reveals it, anathema sit.” Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching of the Church*, p. 39.

232Pope Pius IX, *Singulari quadam*, as cited by *Sources*, p. 414, #1642.

233Pope Pius IX, *Eximiam tuam*, papal brief to the Bishop of Breslau, “The False Doctrine of Anton Guenther,” June 15, 1857, as cited by the *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 418, #1656.

234As Pope Gregory XVI had averred more negatively in the context of two earlier encyclicals, for instance, in *Mirari vos arbitramur*, issued on August 15, 1832 (as cited by the *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 404, #1616), it is said as follows:

It is characteristic of the proud, or rather of the foolish man to test the mysteries of faith “which surpasseth all understanding” [Phil. 4:7] by human standards, and to entrust them to the reasoning of our mind, which by reason of the condition of our human nature is weak and inform.

Similarly, in *Singulari Nos*, issued on June 25, 1834 (as quoted by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi dominica gregis* [*On the Doctrines of the Modernists*], p. 51), it is said as follows:

A lamentable spectacle is that presented by the aberrations of human reason when it yields to the spirit of novelty, when against the warning of the Apostle it seeks to know beyond what it is meant to know, and when relying too much on itself it thinks it can find the truth outside the Catholic Church wherein truth is found without the slightest shadow of error.

235First Vatican Council, *Dei filius*, April 24, 1870, as cited by *Sources*, p. 445, #1789.

236Pope Pius IX, *Eximiam tuam*, as cited in 1907 by Pope Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, #17, as rendered in *On the Doctrines of the Modernists*, pp. 22-23. The same encyclical of Pope St. Pius X cites words from an address of Pope Gregory IX (d. 1241) who had spoken in a similar way (although in more dramatic terms) when addressing a group of theologians in the context of his own

reason precedes faith and leads men to it by the help of revelation and of grace.”<sup>241</sup> As another way of speaking about the proper autonomy of our human reason as it exists apart the kind of help that could be given to us through the reception of grace and the acceptance of revelation, a negative judgment which comes to us in 1861 simply notes that we err (more exactly, it is “unsafe to teach”)<sup>242</sup> if we should hold and propound a belief which says that an “immediate knowledge of God, habitual at least, is essential to the human intellect, so much so that without it the intellect can know nothing, since indeed it is itself intellectual light.”<sup>243</sup> Implicitly, through the wording of this censure, a real distinction obtains between the intellectual light which belongs to ourselves as human beings (the kind of knowing that we are engaged in as human beings, the form of its methodological approach) and the intellectual light which belongs to God as he would exist in himself (the kind of knowing which uniquely belongs

---

day and time (July 7, 1223):

Some among you, puffed up like bladders with the spirit of vanity, strive by profane novelties to cross the boundaries fixed by the Fathers, twisting the meaning of the sacred text...to the philosophical teaching of the rationalists, not for the profit of their hearers but to make a show of science...these men, led away by various and strange doctrines, turn the head into the tail and force the queen to serve the handmaid.

237Pope Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 410, #1635. As the First Vatican Council reiterates these same teachings in 1870 in the context of *Dei filius* (cf. *Sources*, p. 448, #1799):

...not only can faith and reason never be at variance with one another, but they also bring mutual help to each other, since right reasoning demonstrates the basis of faith and, illuminated by its light, perfects the knowledge of divine things, while faith frees and protects reason from errors and provides it with manifold knowledge.

238Please distinguish here between an understanding of human cognition which claims that our human understanding causes itself and another point of view which argues that our understanding is something which is not caused by anything that we do, existing not as an activity (something that we do) but existing as a reception (something that we receive). A theory of cognition which thinks about our cognition in terms of vital act supposes that our understanding exists as something that we directly will and control. We understand when we wish to do so. However, such a view conflicts with a second understanding which acknowledges both an active and a passive element within the operations of our human cognition. No amount of human reasoning, as an activity, can ever produce a desired act of understanding. It always comes unexpectedly as some kind of gift, although, in speaking about the giftedness of our understanding (when it exists as a reception), we should avoid falling into confusions which can arise in our understanding of things if we should not speak about a proper differentiation which exists with respect to the order and the reception of different gifts. Certain gifts are proper for us as created beings. They effect certain kinds of changes for us (certain kinds of changes that are proportionate to the kind of being that we have and enjoy). Human understanding normally occurs in human beings even if human understanding should not be seen as a human product that can be produced at will by the reasoning that we happen to engage in as human beings. Hence, if we want to speak about the giftedness of our human understanding, we should speak about receiving a species of divine help (a *divinum auxilium*) which works inwardly within ourselves as human beings. Cf. Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), p. 113, citing

to God and which is said by some to be constitutive of God as he exists in himself). Nothing is said, however, against a kind of participation that can possibly exist between the contingent kind of intellectual light which belongs to ourselves as human beings and the uncreated, non-contingent kind of intellectual light which would have to exist if we should refer to God and so speak about the kind of being which uniquely belongs to God, totally differing from the kind of being that belongs to anything else.

Subsequent teaching about the ancillary role of human reason is repeated again later in 1862 in the context of a papal letter, an epistle, cited as *Gravissimas inter*, which was dispatched by Pope Pius IX to the Archbishop of Munich-Freising (dated December 11, 1862) although now in a conceptual

---

Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 109, a. 1. Our potency to understand exists as one of the higher potencies which exists or which belongs to us as human beings (when we refer to our souls, we refer to our consciousness of self) and, in receiving God's assistance, we do not refer to movements which are caused by outer, external objects but to internal movements which "are governed immediately by God." Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum*, p. 157, as quoted by J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 129. This help that comes to us from God is not the same thing as God's grace since, if more radical changes are needed in our human lives, if radical changes are to occur within our human lives, we will need a kind of help which refers to higher causes (supernatural causes) that exercise a higher form of causality (a supernatural form of causality): a form of causality which relies on fewer intermediaries or fewer secondary causes and which can sometimes dispense with the use of any kind of secondary cause. Within the depths of our souls, within our minds and hearts, God can act directly and unexpectedly in ways which are most mysterious and which, yet, are most effective and salutary. Certain changes can occur that, otherwise, would simply not occur.

As Bernard Lonergan, for instance, argues in Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 619, Aquinas argues with respect to God that "it belongs to the creator of the will to impress forms upon the will, to infuse virtues in it, to change its disposition, and to bring about an exercise of its act." The impression of forms upon the human will refers to the reception of understanding which exists whenever, as human beings, we experience acts of understanding (understanding always existing as a species of gift). As noted above, no human being produces his or her own acts of understanding. The infusion of virtues, however, refers to another species of gift that can be given by God to us as human beings. Changes of disposition within the inner experience of our human willing refer to the work of saving operative grace and the beginnings of conversion as this can occur within the depths of our conscious lives as human beings. In the actuation of any act of human willing which would move from a condition of potency to a condition of act, human beings always will ends or goals that, ultimately, have been created by God for us initially to will. Whenever any object is sensed or known by us as an object which should be desired and attained, it immediately serves as a species of final cause because it serves to elicit one or more actions in our lives as human subjects in a manner which tries to join a given human being with a desired known object that, in some way, is being experienced in some kind of preliminary way.

239Please note that I have inserted a reference to "reasoning" within square brackets since I think that this is a more accurate translation because the word and meaning of *ratiocinatio* is to be distinguished from the word and meaning of *ratio*, *ratiocinatio* referring to an activity and *ratio*, a

context which directly refers to philosophy (the role and task of philosophical reasoning) and the dangers of working from a mistaken understanding about the nature of philosophy which allegedly comes from various unnamed persons (in Germany) who are cited as “worshippers of philosophy.”<sup>244</sup> If the phraseology of earlier teaching had spoken about the powers or the autonomy of our unaided acts of human cognition which exist as functions of our unaided human reason, the shift in terminology adverts now to the legitimate autonomy of philosophy as a distinct mode of scientific inquiry, having a “true freedom” of its own, a freedom which is to be identified as “the freedom of science” which belongs in each discipline its each its own way in the conduct of any given scientific discipline.<sup>245</sup> Hence, with respect to philosophy, “its own principles or methods” are to be respected and

---

subject or doer of *ratiocinatio*. With our minds or through our minds, we engage in the reasoning activity which belongs to us as human beings. I would argue too that “reasoning” exists as a larger thing than “deductive reasoning” or “deductive thought” if we should find that we are working with a meaning for “deduction” which thinks of it in mechanistic terms. To avoid controversy, I omit any reference to reasoning in terms of “deduction.”

240Pope Pius IX, “False Traditionalism (against Augustine Bonnetty),” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 416, #1650.

241Pope Pius IX, “False Traditionalism (against Bonnetty),” *Sources*, p. 416, #1651.

242Albert Keller, “Ontologism,” *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 4, p. 291.

243Pope Pius IX, “Errors of the Ontologists,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 419, #1659. See also error n. 4 (#1662) which opines that, implicitly in God, we know all other beings. Cf. Keller, “Ontologism,” p. 291. Citing more literally from the wording of the censure which is given in *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 420, #1662: “Congenital knowledge of God...involves in an eminent way all other cognition, so that by it we hold as known implicitly all being, under whatever aspect it is knowable.” Hence, if it is not right to argue or to claim that, as human subjects, we enjoy an *a priori* intuitive, immediate knowledge of God that grounds all our subsequent acts of knowing and living, then, *a fortiori*, it is not right to argue or to claim that our subsequent acts of human cognition are to be understood essentially as specifications of intuition that exist at a lower (subordinate) level.

244Pope Pius IX, “False Freedom of Science (against James Frohschammer),” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 420, #1670.

245“False Freedom of Science,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 423, #1674. Please note that the older conceptuality remained in continued use as a favored mode of expression on the part of the Church's Magisterium: we find references to that which exists as “reason” (our human reason) and negative affirmations as a means of communicating the Church's true teaching. For instance, in a papal allocution of June 9, 1862, in *Maxima quidem*, and as cited by the *Syllabus of Errors* (issued by the Holy See on December 8, 1864), it is said that one errs if one holds that “human reason, with absolutely no regard to God, is the only judge of the true and the false, the good and the evil; it is a law unto itself and is, by its own natural powers, sufficient to provide for the good of individuals and of peoples.” Cf. to secure the welfare of men and of nations.” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 435, #1703. Quoting from *Qui pluribus*, a papal encyclical issued on November 9, 1846, it is said in a different way that it is wrong to hold that “reason is the ultimate standard by which man can and ought to arrive at the knowledge of all truths of every kind.” Hence, as a consequence, we must err if we should hold that “every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true.” Cf. *Maxima quidem* and *Multiplikes inter*, dated June 10, 1851, as cited by the *Syllabus of Errors*. It is wrong to believe that “philosophy is to be treated without taking any account of supernatural revelation,” citing from *Tuas libenter*, December 21, 1863, as cited by the *Syllabus of*

acknowledged so, from this, as a consequence, the right to “its own conclusions.”<sup>246</sup> Nothing needs to be admitted “which has not been acquired by it [by philosophy] under its own conditions, or...[which is] foreign to it.”<sup>247</sup> As the Church's Magisterium notes in *Gravissimas inter*, the “true and sole principles and rights of reason and philosophic study” are to be regarded as an essentially valuable thing and, as a consequence, they should be protected and guarded.<sup>248</sup> More explicitly, with respect to the mission or the purpose of philosophy:

[It is to be admitted that] true and sound philosophy has its own most noble position, since it is the characteristic of such philosophy to search diligently into truth, and to cultivate and illustrate rightly and carefully human reason, darkened as it is by the guilt of the first man, but by no means extinct; and to perceive, to understand well, to advance the object of its cognition and many truths; and to demonstrate, vindicate, and defend, by arguments sought from its own principles, many of those truths, such as the existence, nature, [and] attributes of God which faith also proposes for our belief; and, in this way, to build a road to those dogmas more correctly held by faith, and even to those more profound dogmas which can be perceived by faith alone at first, so that they may in some way be understood by reason. The exacting and most beautiful science of true philosophy ought, indeed, to do such things and to be occupied with them.<sup>249</sup>

By way of summary then, we would say that philosophy or our unaided acts of human reason best fulfill their purpose and function if and when they serve transcendental purposes or, in other words, if and when, in some way, they exist for the service of God and religion and the kind of religion which exists because it has been revealed to us by God, coming to us through the mediation of the Church's teaching and the authority of her Magisterium, directing our minds and hearts toward a knowledge of divine things and forming our moral consciences to a surer and better degree if they can point to the role and place of divine sanctions and a higher authority which ultimately comes to us from God and the providential kind of government which he exercises as the first principle of all things (as the Creator and Redeemer of the universe). As Pope Pius IX had taught in an allocution that he had given on June 9, 1862 (in *Maxima quidem*), persons err who think or believe that “the science of philosophical things and morals and also civil laws may and ought to keep aloof from divine and ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>250</sup> The arts and practice of our human inquiry as learning human subjects is harmed, it is thwarted, or it is distorted, or we can say that it is handicapped if it cannot work within a larger horizon of meaning which acknowledges an order of meaning and being which is greater than the order of meaning and being that can be known by us in a direct fashion through acts of inquiry which, in some way, could be separated or which could be divorced from the commitments and inclinations of religious belief and the kind of inquiry which occurs within the conduct and the observance of Catholic theology. Admitting the truth of conclusions which would argue that the proper object of philosophical

---

*Errors.*

246“False Freedom of Science,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 423, #1674.

247“False Freedom of Science,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 423, #1674.

248“False Freedom of Science,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 420, #1670.

249“False Freedom of Science,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 421-422, #1670.

250Pope Pius IX, *Maxima quidem*, June 9, 1862, as cited by the *Syllabus of Errors* (issued December 8, 1864), <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P9SYLL.HTM> (accessed October 19, 2015).

inquiry differs from the proper object of theological inquiry<sup>251</sup> at the same time does not imply or deny that, in another sense, they are both directed to the same object or the same goal: God as the first principle of all things although, as we have noted, God as the first principle of all things differs from God when he is considered as our Savior, as the source of our redemption. Each moves (philosophy and theology) toward a knowledge of God that is connatural or which is proper for the kind of inquiry that is being employed or used. The difference in methodology points to a difference in determining the formal or heuristic object although, if the methodology of philosophical inquiry is incorporated or if, relatively speaking, it is used as a species of first principle within the methodology or the praxis of theology (our theological forms of inquiry), on this basis thus, we can understand why the Church's Magisterium should speak about the demonstrative powers of human reason within an order of meaning which also refers to the work and tasks of theology. Hence, as follows, in an encyclical letter which comes to us from Pope Pius IX in 1873:

The faith teaches us and *human reason demonstrates* that a double order of things exists, and that we must therefore distinguish between the two earthly powers, the one of natural origin which provides for secular affairs and the tranquility of human society, the other of supernatural origin, which presides over the City of God, that is to say the Church of Christ, which has been divinely instituted for the sake of souls and of eternal salvation...<sup>252</sup> (italics mine)

---

251In later teaching which comes to us in 1870 from the First Vatican Council in *Dei filius* (the “Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith”), this thesis is restated in a manner which ratifies the Church's earlier teaching as this has come to us from the earlier teaching of Pope Pius IX (cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 442-443, #1781):

...there is a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only in principle but also in object: (1) in principle, indeed, because we know in one way by natural reason, in another by divine faith; (2) in object, however, because, in addition to things to which natural reason can attain, mysteries hidden in God, are proposed to us for belief which had they not been divinely revealed, could not become known.

252Pope Pius IX, *Etsi multa*, November 21, 1873, allegedly “often appended to *The Syllabus [of Errors]*,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P9SYLL.HTM> (accessed October 19, 2015). From a teaching or thesis that speaks about a double order which exists within the order of our human cognition (“natural [human] reason” and “divine faith”), we can conclude to a double or twofold order which exists with respect to two distinct order of being. One refers to the things of this world and the other refers to a higher of things which exist in a transcendent way. For a restatement and an application of this teaching as it comes to us from 1965 in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, from *Gaudium et Spes* (promulgated on December 7, 1965), p. 172, #36, it is accordingly noted as follows:

If by the autonomy of earthly realities we understand that created things and societies have their own laws and values which the human person must gradually come to know, use and organize, then it is altogether right to demand that autonomy...It is by virtue of their very creation that all things are provided with a stability, truth and goodness of their own, with their own laws and order.



If, in fact, our Catholic faith should teach us about the existence of a double order of things (a natural order of things and a supernatural order of things or, naturalism versus supernaturalism), then, from the possible self-knowledge which can exist for us within the work and practice of philosophy (through engaging in philosophical forms of inquiry), from the context of our self-understanding we should come to know and realize at some point that, in our thirst for understanding and knowledge, an unrestricted desire can be adverted to (it undeniably exists),<sup>253</sup> and yet, at the same time too, this same desire is known to be something which is wholly lacking in any kind of fulfillment that could possibly come to it from the mere practice of philosophy (employing our unaided acts of human reason) *apart from the kind of knowledge which could possibly exist for us if we should move from the kind of knowledge which belongs solely to philosophy to the kind of knowledge which belongs to the deliverance and the profession of a religious creed and the work of theological forms of inquiry that would be dedicated to a work of clarification as this pertains to the tenets of one's beliefs and creed: determining the parameters of any received teachings and indicating how all these teachings are to be related to each other in a way which would point to the being of a greater whole.* Wherever any kind of understanding exists, whenever any growth in our understanding exists, the result is always an expansion of our apprehensions relative to the being of real things: a larger number of objects are known by us and a larger number of relations which would be known by us within a context which refers to a single point of view which encompasses a greater whole.

---

253For a restatement of this teaching which employs a different conceptuality from that of Pope Pius IX and which seems to point more clearly to the unrestrictedness of our human desire for understanding and truth, please note how this issue was discussed by the Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes*, which was promulgated on December 7, 1965, #15 (as cited below, as taken from *The Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, p. 134):

Man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe...he has always searched for more penetrating truths, and finds them. For his intelligence is not confined to observable data alone, but can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partly obscured and weakened.

In a way which then refers to how the extent of our human inquiry sets us apart from every other kind of living being within the order of creation, in an encyclical letter of 1998, in *Fides et Ratio*, when introducing the teaching of this encyclical, Pope John Paul II refers to the primacy of our desire to move towards self-understanding and self-knowledge. Citing some of his own words which point to pre-Christian origins: “The admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth [which is] to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as 'human beings,' that is as those who 'know themselves.’” Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 1. The unrestrictedness of our desire to understand knows no bounds even if it should discover and even as it must discover that certain objects (certain things, certain questions, certain topics) cannot be adequately understood and known by us when we engage in our created acts of human inquiry and reasoning and as we receive acts of understanding which are proportionate to the kind of of inquiry which belongs to us as contingent, created beings (apart from receptions of grace that would point us toward an order of redemption which differs from the kind of lower order which exists when we refer to how a created order initially exists and how it is supposed by a higher order which refers to the order of our salvation and the work of God's intervening grace). Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 4-5.

Turning now to a fuller statement of things and a development of church teaching which we can find if we should attend to the teaching of the First Vatican Council and how, in 1870, it spoke about the kind of knowing which allegedly occurs through our unaided acts of human reason (prior or apart from the advent of revelation and the response to it which is given by us through the profession and beliefs of faith): as dogma, in its prescribed teaching, the First Vatican Council affirms that “God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the things that were created [by means of created things], through the natural light of human reason [*Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse*], for 'ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made' [Romans 1:20].”<sup>254</sup>

Two developments or two distinctions elicit our attention here (two nuances of meaning are to be alluded to in the conceptuality of the teaching which the Council proposes and which it affirms). First, a “natural light of human reason” is specified as the proper cognitive subject or the proper cognitive operator instead of simply ourselves as concretely existing human beings where, in the concrete, in a *de facto* kind of way, we would be operating through the “light of our human reason” as this is given to

---

254 *Dei Filius*, ch. 2, “Of Revelation,” as cited by Dupuis, p. 43, #113; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *God His Existence and His Nature A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, vol. 1, trans. Dom Bede Rose OSB (Albany, New York: Preserving Christian Publications, Inc., 1993), p. 8. At the time of the First Vatican Council, when the natural knowability of God was being proposed as a teaching which should be included in the authoritative teaching of this Council, a *schema* that was prepared by the *Deputatio de Fide* and preliminary memoranda that were distributed among the Church fathers proffers the following explanation:

The definition that God can be certainly known by the light of natural reason, through the medium of created things, as well as the canon corresponding to this definition, were deemed necessary, not only because of Traditionalism [the errors of Traditionalism], but also because of the wide-spread error that the existence of God cannot be proved by any apodictic argument, and consequently that by no process of human reasoning can the certainty of it be established.

Cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 9, citing from Vacant, *Etudes sur les Const. Du Concile du Vatican*, p. 286, and Document VII, p. 610. In its manner of restating this teaching, according to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in *Lumen gentium* 6, it is said that *Deum omnium rerum principium et finem naturali humanae rationis lumine certo cognosci posse* [God, the beginning and the end of all things can be certainly known by the natural light of human reason], as cited by Amerio, *Iota Unum*, pp. 337-338 & n. 7. Elsewhere, in *Dei verbum* 6, word for word, the Second Vatican Council reiterates the claims and the truth of this teaching in its quotation of the teaching of the First Vatican Council, noting that “God, the beginning and the end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the [natural] light of human reason [*Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse*].” Cf. *Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, p. 79; *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., eds. Josepho Alberigo, J. A. Dossetti, Perikle Joannou, Claudio Leonardi, and Paulo Prodi (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2013), p. 973. The original Latin refers to the “natural light of human reason” as in *naturali humanae rationis lumine*.

us in different measures and qualities as we move from one individual to another individual. Instead of reason in its concrete embodiment in the lives of different individual human beings, the claims of natural reason are emphasized and not any kind of competence which could be said to belong to the abilities of our fallen human reason with respect to how, in its own way, it can also possibly move toward a knowledge about the truth or the reality of God's existence.<sup>255</sup> Reason being reason, the intelligibility of reason or the principles or the causes of reason are such that it belongs to the potency or the capacity of our human reason that it can possibly move us toward a possible knowledge of the being of God's existence.<sup>256</sup> However, whether, in fact, our concretely existing human reason will inevitably succeed in bringing us to a knowledge about the being of God's existence is another matter and a question which is not addressed. The potency of our reason is one thing and the actuality of our reason is another.<sup>257</sup> A question of law or norm where refers to that which ought to be differs from any question which asks about what, in fact, happens in the lives of human beings. Hence, if we are to move from a condition of potency and possibility to questions about acts and actualities, other variables need to be identified and distinguished and, if they are identified and known, they need to be judged in terms of their particular relevance or their applicability in a given case within a given situation. As a general principle which needs to be remembered: the presentation of rational arguments about the being of God's existence cannot force or compel another person to believe in the truth of God's being if, at the same time, our rational assent to arguments would have to require a response which would exist in terms of our human willing in a willing which would be turned toward the requirements of worship and obedience.<sup>258</sup> God being God, the kind of intelligibility that belongs to God and which is constitutive of God (with respect to God as the beginning and end of all things), the meaning and being of God immediately evokes from us or it requires of us both an act of understanding which, in judgment, exists as our assent to God and an act of willing which would exist as our reasonable and rational consent as the rationality of our assent moves into the reasonableness and rationality of our consent in a cooperation and acting which points to why our consent exists as a larger, greater thing.

For an analogy here about what happens when we move so readily from assent to consent, think about what is like, in cases of combat and human conflict, when a combatant begins to realize that he or she is supposed to take the life of another person who happens to exist also as another human being. As soon as we should begin to know and realize that the other is another human being, can we kill the other who happens to exist as another human being? To know that the other exists as a human being immediately implies that we must behave toward the other in a certain way and not in some other kind of way.

Second, while the First Vatican Council reaffirms previous magisterial teaching to the effect that, with certainty, through the mediation of our reason we can prove the being of God's existence, this Council also adds a subsidiary positive judgment when it identifies the appropriate method of argumentation which should be used in arguments that would allegedly prove the truth of the being of God's existence.

---

<sup>255</sup>Neil Ormerod, *A Public God: Natural Theology Reconsidered* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), p. 13; Lonergan, *Second Collection*, p. 100.

<sup>256</sup>Fergus Kerr, "Knowing God by reason alone: what Vatican I never said," *New Blackfriars* (2010): 221-222.

<sup>257</sup>Lonergan, *Second Collection*, p. 100.

<sup>258</sup>Kerr, "Knowing God by reason alone," *New Blackfriars*, p. 221, citing Marcel Chossat, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, v. 4, p. 824.

In this context, we are encouraged to work from a mediated knowledge of created things [*e rebus creatis*] in a manner which would have to point us toward the truthfulness of a philosophy of human cognition that is derived from an Aristotelian understanding of human cognition with respect to how, in a *posteriori* way, through inference, we can move from a knowledge of things that is first given to us within the data of our experience toward a knowledge of things which is not given to us immediately within the data of our experience,<sup>259</sup> but which could be possibly grasped and known by us through a form of learning and knowing which is determined by an interaction which arises between that which we initially understand and know and any questions that, perhaps, we could ask about that which we initially understand and know.

With respect to the reasonableness or the truthfulness of this teaching about how, properly, we can move toward a knowledge of the truth of God's existence, as the First Vatican Council notes in support of how it understands how we should speak about the knowability of God's existence: as testimony, the words of scripture point to the truth of the Council's teaching; and implicitly, the testimony of tradition also points to the truth of this teaching if we should attend to various commentaries of one kind or another which have come down to us from the Church's theologians as we should find these, for instance, in the writings of the Church Fathers.<sup>260</sup> Within the wording of the teaching that is given to us by the First Vatican Council, in its teaching however, the First Vatican Council does not distinguish, on the one hand, between created things that exist externally to ourselves as human beings and, on the

---

<sup>259</sup>Employing a more poetic form of phraseology within the conceptuality of its official teaching, the Second Vatican Council avers that, in the exercise of his human cognition, “man passes through visible realities to those which are unseen.” Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, and as quoted by the *Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, p. 134.

<sup>260</sup>See Ott, p. 14 for a discussion and a presentation of this testimony which is referred to as the “proof from tradition.” If, for instance, we should refer to the experience of created things that is given to us through our acts and data of sense, from the thought of Theophilus of Antioch (in *ad Autolyicum* 1, 4-5), we have a kind of argumentation which seems to be intended by him and which best points to the later teaching of the First Vatican Council about how we can move toward proofs about the being or the reality of God's existence:

God has called everything into existence from nothing, so that His greatness might be known and understood through His works. Just as the soul in man is not seen, as it is invisible, but is known through the movement of his body, so God cannot be seen with human eyes; but He is observed and known through providence and His works. Just as one, at the sight of a well-equipped ship which sweeps over the sea and steers towards a harbor, becomes aware that there is a helmsman on her, who directs her, so also one must be aware that God is the director of everything, even though He is not seen with bodily eyes, as He cannot be apprehended by them.

However, as Ott notes, the Latin Church Fathers preferred to work from the data of our inner experience in order to move from there toward conclusions that would affirm the truth of God's existence. From a viewpoint which would be determined by someone who could be regarded as an initial or casual reader, the reference to “created things” would seem to point to externally existing objects which exist within the data of our sensible experience.

other hand, created things which would exist in an internal way if we should refer, not to the data of our sense experience, but to the data of our consciousness of self (the inner experience which we have of ourselves if we should refer to the data of our self-consciousness or the data of our self-awareness: the experience which we have of our subjective existence, our subjectivity).

An awareness of this distinction can only be found, it seems, if we should refer to a disciplinary canon which the First Vatican Council enjoins elsewhere with respect to how, in the practice of our faith and theology, the rights of reason are to be preserved and maintained in a way which points to the legitimacy of our cognitive operations (apart from the kind of knowledge which exists in the practice of belief and faith and any receptions of grace and favor that could be given to us from the bounty of a beneficent, provident God). Hence, in the words of this canon: “if anyone shall have said that divine revelation cannot be made credible by *external signs*, and for this reason men ought to be moved to faith by the internal experience alone of each one, or by private inspiration: let him be anathema [let him be condemned].”<sup>261</sup> Italics mine. A later statement of Church teaching which acknowledges and which distinguishes between the data of our external experience and the data of our internal experience only comes to us some years later in 1992; the context is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>262</sup> There, it is noted that both kinds of data (the external and the internal) can serve as legitimate points of departure for any reflections which can possibly lead us toward an affirmation about the truth of God's existence. “Starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty” and also “the human person...with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness...the signs of his spiritual soul.”<sup>263</sup> These points and elaborations aside however where their context is a development in meaning which adds to the wording and augments the teaching which comes to us from the First Vatican Council, according to the disciplinary canon which the First Vatican Council has attached to its teaching about the knowability of God (apart from revelation), no distinction is drawn in a way which distinguishes between these two aforementioned kinds of experience. Hence, more simply: “if anyone says that the one true God, Our Creator and Lord cannot be known with certainty in the light of human reason by those things which have been made [*per ea quae facta sunt*], *anathema sit* [let him be condemned].”<sup>264</sup>

In addition however, with respect to a question which can be raised about the nature of this aforementioned natural light of human reason (about how it works or how it functions), according to one translation which is given to us, the First Vatican Council goes on to note that our natural light of human reason is such that it knows things by way of a relation with “the intrinsic evidence of things.”<sup>265</sup> In Latin, *propter intrinsecam rerum veritatem rationis lumine perspectam*.<sup>266</sup> Alternatively, in a second translation which is more literal and less free: “the intrinsic truth of things is recognized by

---

261 *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 450, #1812.

262 Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 15, #32-#33; Kerr, “Knowing God by reason alone,” *New Blackfriars*, p. 226.

263 Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 15, #32-#33.

264 Ott, p. 13, citing First Vatican Council, “Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 449, #1806.

265 Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 17, citing from Vatican I, chapter 3, “Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith [sometimes cited as *Dei filius*]” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 445, #1789.

266 Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 17.

the natural light of reason.”<sup>267</sup> Truth is associated with a species of recognition which allegedly points to apprehensions of evidence (according to one reading that has been posed as a legitimate interpretation). Truths are grasped or existing things are known with a certitude which objectively refers to an inherent reasonableness which directly refers to an inner experience of luminosity that is given to us within the data of our cognitive experience, an experience which is triggered by the reception of a catalytic agent cause: a species of agent cause which has been identified with that which exists for us as compelling evidence. The evidence exists as *relevant* or *telling evidence* because that which exists as evidence for a given apprehension of truth does not always exist or, in fact, it does not exist as evidence for other possible apprehensions of truth. Condict reasons, which are experienced within our understanding before they are specified and put into communicable concepts, exist as specifications of adequate evidence in connection with the truth of a given thesis. The objectivity of a given thesis moves from having an ideational kind of objectivity to having a factual kind of objectivity. The objectivity exists as a greater thing. But, at the same time also, when we refer to a positive relation which exists between a knowledge of truth and an apprehension of pertinent reasons (the two going together), a cognitive or subjective pole is to be identified more clearly if we refer to the experience of verification that we feel and which is immediately given to us through our apprehensions of evidence, the apprehensions immediately giving to us, first, an experience of evidence (the data exist as evidence and they are known by us to exist as condign evidence), and then, secondly, an experience of understanding since the reception of evidence immediately gives to us or, immediately, it evokes from us an act of understanding which admits or which knows a truth that is grasped and known to exist as a truth. An idea is now known to be true and not false.

Hence, with the help that comes to us from the analysis of Garrigou-Lagrange: when we think about the character and the scope of this type of knowledge that we can have about the truth of God's existence, we must admit that “the knowledge of God which can be acquired by the natural light of reason, is not merely a true knowledge, i.e., conforming to...reality; but it is also a knowledge of truth for which we are able to give a reason.”<sup>268</sup> The reasons are known; they are experienced by us through the inner awareness which we have of them. The requirements of rationality always suppose that we can refer to experiences of evidence that other persons can also possibly have and enjoy within the context and the ambit of their individual cognitive experience: their own acts of inquiry, as these are experienced by them, and their own acts of understanding as these are also experienced by them (as these are given to them through their experience of self). The kind of evidence which is to be admitted points to its essentially public nature (its availability to other persons) and not to any kind of cognitive experience or any kind of datum that would be inaccessible to the experience of other human beings (the experience being either too private or, by its very nature, private and not public).<sup>269</sup> Anyone with

---

<sup>267</sup>*Dei filius*, ch. 3, “Of Faith,” as cited by Dupuis, p. 44, #118.

<sup>268</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 17.

<sup>269</sup>For evidence with respect to the truth of this conclusion as this is taught to us by the Church's Magisterium, please attend to the wording of canon 3 as this is cited by the First Vatican Council in *Dei filius* (in section 3 on faith): “if anyone shall have said that divine revelation cannot be made credible by external signs, and for this reason men ought to be moved to faith by the internal experience alone of each one, or by private inspiration: let him be anathema [let him be condemned].” Cf. *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 450, #1812. According to a manner of speaking which comes to us from the teaching of Pope Pius XII in 1950 in *Humani generis*, 4: “God has provided us with an amazing wealth of external evidence by which the divine origins of the Christian religion can be brought home beyond question, even to the unaided light of reason.” Cf. Neuner and Roos, *Teaching*

questions and with a reflective mind should be able to access the same set of relevant evidence; inquire and learn from it; and so reach the same conclusions that the available evidence points to and verifies; and then, from there, be in a position to share this same evidence and one's conclusions with other persons in ways which would then point them toward the truth of the proposition in question: in this case, with respect to the truth or the real being of God's existence (a truth which can be known, irrespective of whether we should speak about the integrity of our human nature or about our human nature as it would exist apart from the influence or stain of any kind of sin, or whether we should speak about the fallenness of our human condition in all the confusions which therefore tend to exist between the order of our human passions or desires and the kind of order which belongs to how we think and understand as human beings, moving from a lack of understanding and knowledge toward an increment in that which we currently understand and know).<sup>270</sup>

In moving then to a subsidiary question which would now want to ask about how we can apprehend the kind of evidence which is referred to as “intrinsic” or, as we would say, “sufficient,” in a manner which points to a further development which pertains to how we should speak about the nature of telling, relevant evidence (what is evidence, what is intrinsic evidence, what is the reasonableness that belongs to our apprehensions of evidence?), when we attend to a teaching that comes to us in 1910 from Pope St. Pius X, in the first proposition that is given to us in the *Oath against Modernism* (which was issued on September 1, 1910), we find two refinements in meaning which are presented by the Church's Magisterium as this pertains to how we can speak about moving to a natural knowledge about the being of God's existence: a conceptuality is offered which attends in a general way to (1) the meaning of causality and, at the same time too, it adverts to (2) a specific kind of knowing or a specific kind of proof which exists as *demonstration* (given the inclusion of the Latin verb *demonstrari* and if we should render it in terms which refer to the proof of *demonstration* (where, as a condition in argument, a conclusion is said to be true because it has been “demonstrated”). In other words, a knowledge or a proof exists in terms of demonstration although not all claims to knowledge nor do all references to evidence and proof have to exist in a way which would have to refer to the kind of certain or apodictic argument which exists as a demonstration.<sup>271</sup> The emphasis on the necessity of demonstration and the ascription of a meaning to causality both point thus to a development in thinking or an enhancement of meaning which transcends the kind of language and the meaning which had been expressed and affirmed earlier by the First Vatican Council in 1870 and the teaching which comes to us from this council. In the discussions which had occurred earlier in meetings which had led to the determinations of the First Vatican Council in 1870, it had been decided to speak about knowledge (a knowledge which is certain) and not about demonstration (*cognosci* and not *demonstrari*) although, in contrast with this position, the *Oath against Modernism* speaks about a knowledge which is certain and then, on the basis of this kind of knowledge, it speaks about a kind of knowledge which would have to exist as a

---

*of the Catholic Church*, p. 45; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_12081950\\_humani-generis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html) (accessed October 5, 2017).

<sup>270</sup>See Ott, p. 112. In a commonly accepted understanding which exists about the applicability or the consequences which follow from the Church's teaching, it is said that, despite the presence of sin, “in the condition of Original Sin, man possesses the ability of knowing natural religious truths and of performing natural morally good actions.”

<sup>271</sup>Pope Pius X, “Oath Against the Errors of Modernism,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 549-550, #2145; also cited by Ott, p. 15; and Fergus Kerr OP, “Knowing God by reason alone: what Vatican I never said,” *New Blackfriars* (2010): 218.

demonstration.<sup>272</sup> The one kind of knowledge necessarily leads to the other or it points to the other: a knowledge which is certain to a knowledge which has been demonstrated.<sup>273</sup>

Citing the text of the relevant proposition in the *Oath against Modernism*: “I profess that God, the beginning and end of all things [*Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem*], can be known with certainty, and therefore also demonstrated [*certo cognosci adeoque demonstrari etiam*] by the natural light of reason [*naturali rationis lumine*] through the things which He has made, that is to say, through the visible works of His creation, just as the cause is made known to us by its effects [*per se quae facta sunt, hoc est per visibilia creationis opera tamquam causam per effectus*].”<sup>274</sup> For the first time in the articulation of the Church's official teaching, in a manner which springs from an understanding about

---

<sup>272</sup>Kerr, “Knowing God by reason alone,” *New Blackfriars*, p. 222, citing Chossat, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, v. 4, p. 847.

<sup>273</sup>Please note, however, that the question of development is a matter of some dispute. If we should argue, for instance, that no real difference exists between a kind of knowing which is certain and a kind of knowing which exists as a demonstration, then the kind of development which we must speak about would be limited to a development in the use of linguistic concepts. As a term, in the context of an understanding of demonstration which comes to us from an Aristotelian understanding of deduction in logic and the mediation of this understanding which comes to us through the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas (see, for instance, the *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 2, a. 2 where Aquinas speaks in a positive way about the demonstrability of proving the being of God's existence), “demonstration” points to a meaning and the punch of a technical expression. To know anything in a way which is self-evident and certain supposes a kind of knowing which would have to exist as a demonstration, or it implies that we must indicate how our claim to certain knowledge would have to exist as a species of demonstration if our knowledge is, in fact, to be truly certain in the claims that it makes. In the understanding of judgment which comes to us from Aristotle and Aquinas: in indicating the grounds of our cognition, we would have to refer to a set of fundamental first principles which would have to exist for us in our acts of sense and in how they are united to the thinking which occurs through our laws of reason (as these are observed, for instance, when we refer to the principles which exist when we think about the logical laws which exist in identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle).

However, while we can admit that arguments can be offered to the effect that these two kinds of knowledge refer to the same thing (certain knowledge and demonstrative knowledge), it can be argued that, in encountering the linguistic differences which exist between these two expressions, at the same time, we would be sensing or believing that, in the reference to “demonstration,” a stronger meaning is being suggested. As we move from the teaching of the First Vatican Council to the kind of teaching that exists in the *Oath against Modernism*, a greater emphasis is being given to how or why we can speak about the certainty of our knowledge. More is being said about the competence or the abilities of our human reason in terms of the acts or the operations that essentially belong to it. A greater confidence is shown in the abilities or the reasoning of our human reasoning and, conversely, the wrongness or the irrationality of any arguments which would try to claim that God's existence is a thesis that cannot be sufficiently known and proved by us by way of our contingent acts of human reasoning and the manner that this acts are linked to the kind of cognition which belongs to us with respect to all our of various acts of human sensing.

On another note, however, it is to be noticed that the *Oath against Modernism* is no longer in force in the life of the Church since, in a decision which comes to us from Pope Paul VI, its imposition



how, allegedly and abstractly, our unaided acts of human understanding can move from a given knowledge of created things toward a possible knowledge of uncreated things, or how our acts of understanding can move from the givens of our experience toward the affirmation of a newly known first principle which would exist for us as some kind of supreme transcendent first cause (in both cases, we move from that which we know to that which we can come to know), we find that the principle of causality is spoken about in a way which alleges that it is to be viewed as a species of ontological, transcendent principle (something which legitimately belongs to the general order of things which is constitutive of the kind of world that we happen to live in and which allows us to move from lower orders or lower realms of being toward higher orders of being or higher realms of being in a manner which enlarges the scope and the grasp of our human awareness, uniting us to a larger world of things than what we had previously known and experienced).<sup>275</sup> Through apprehensions of cause and effect which can move us from lower species of causes toward higher species of causes, we can discover a kind of general order which exists within our world: an order with an ordering which reduces a multiplicity of many different elements or parts into an inclusive perspective which knows about (1) the existence of an overall scheme and, from an understanding of this scheme, (2) an understanding which knows about a generative principle of order which transcends the order which exists as a species of effect.

But, if, in its language, the *Oath against Modernism* points to the being of a metaphysical principle that is to be equated with the principle of causality, in a Thomist thesis which was specified soon afterwards in 1914 by the Sacred Congregation of Education and Studies and which was prescribed in 1916 as a “safe, directive norm” for increases in our understanding that are possible for us as would be human knowers, this principle is spoken about in cognitional terms with respect to the proper kind of analysis which we should attempt as we try to move from an initial apprehension of effects toward an apprehension of the responsible causes.<sup>276</sup> Distinguishing a certain type of effect points to a distinct

---

was dropped in 1967 (it is no longer administered to church officials) and that, while later teaching documents continue to refer to knowledge about God in terms which speak about the possibility of our having a knowledge which is certain by way of the mediation which exists through the natural light of our human reason, the language which is being used at this time has ceased to speak about the validity of demonstration and the the necessity or the appropriateness of this kind of proceeding in any arguments that can be proposed for the acceptance of another judgment. Cf. Kerr, “Knowing God by reason alone,” *New Blackfriars*, p. 226; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath\\_against\\_modernism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_against_modernism) (accessed October 29, 2017);

274My translation, but adapted from the translation that is given in Kerr, p. 218, and in Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 13.

275Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 20.

276With respect to the Thomism that is expressly referred to in the advice that is given to us through the teaching of this magisterial document (in the *Twenty-four Theses of the Philosophy of St. Thomas*, dated July 27, 1914), the wording of this teaching explicitly refers to the earlier teaching of Pope St. Pius X as this was given in his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (issued on September 8, 1907) which had recalled and which confirms the earlier teaching of Pope Leo XIII on the importance of taking on the thought and mind of Aquinas in the work which we should be doing in philosophy and theology in posing our philosophical and theological questions. According to the teaching of this encyclical: for the sake of sound instruction in the ways and means of philosophy, it is best that “we admonish professors to bear well in mind that they cannot set aside [the teaching and doctrine of] St. Thomas, especially in metaphysical questions, without incurring grave disadvantages.” Cf. Roberto de

species of cause (we can know about the being and the existence of a cause according to the particular aspect of it that is revealed to us as soon as an intended object is specified through the posing of a particular question that we could be asking), the proper and proximate context for our inquiries about God being always an orientation which is directed toward *a posteriori* apprehensions of being and the possible reception of the kind of understanding which is given to us in our *a posteriori* apprehensions of being. In the kind of thinking that we are to do and in the kind of argument which is prescribed for us if we are to avoid obstacles and grave disadvantages which would come to us if we were to engage in other kinds of thinking and argument, it is to be noted about the recommendable kind of inference which exists in this type of argument that five instances or five kinds of inferences are to be distinguished from each other in a manner which is rooted in the earlier teaching of St. Thomas

---

Mattei, *The Second Vatican Council: An Unwritten Story*, trans. Patrick T. Brannan, Michael J. Miller, and Kenneth D. Whitehead (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2012), p. 34; <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm> (accessed October 25, 2017). See also [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_19070908\\_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html) (accessed October 25, 2017). The wording of this translation is partially my own. With respect to the asking of philosophical questions (and these would include asking questions about the nature of our human minds), if we are to understand how we are to understand our own acts of understanding, the teaching office of the Church points to the kind of understanding and reflection which best exists in the thought and methodology of Aquinas since no better guide exists for the kind of thinking that we can do and for the kind of thinking that we should be doing other than the kind of thought which is to be associated with the achievements of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Consequently, in the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV and immediately in the wake of the earlier teaching of Pope St. Pius X, in the new *Code of Canon Law* which was promulgated in 1917, its canon 1366 # 2 prescribes the method, the doctrines, and the principles of St. Thomas for the teaching and pursuit of our inquiries in philosophy and theology. If we are to pursue philosophical and theological studies in a manner which is to be truly valuable and fruitful, in all Catholic institutions, all teachers of philosophy and theology (and by implication all students in philosophy and theology) are to be guided and trained according to the mind of Aquinas. According to the prescription which exists in canon 1366 #2: *Philosophiae rationalis ac theologiae studia et alumnorum in his disciplinis institutionem professores omnino pertractent ad Angelici Doctoris rationem, doctrinam et principia, eaque sancte teneant* [rational philosophy and theology must be taught according to the method, teaching, and principles of the Angelic Doctor, to which the professors should religiously adhere]. Cf. <http://www.jgray.org/codes/cic17lat.html> (accessed October 25, 2017). Hence, in a manner which points both to the continuity of this teaching and also to the belief in the good and the need of its constant reiteration, in its own way, the Second Vatican Council prescribes the same kind of teaching that is given to us in its *Decree on Priestly Formation* (in *Optatam totius*, 16, citing its Latin title): “by way of making the mysteries of salvation known as thoroughly as they can be, students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculative reason [that is] exercised under the tutelage of St. Thomas [*S. Thoma magistro*].” Cf. *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbot, p. 452; Anthony A. Akinwale, “The Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius*,” *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, eds. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 240. In the debates and the discussions which had led to the Council's reassertion of traditional teaching about the importance of Aquinas as regards both the value of his method and the truthfulness of his teaching and conclusions, it had been noted by supporters and proponents that, to date [by 1965], over one hundred

Aquinas who speaks about about five ways or five proofs for the being of God's existence.<sup>277</sup> According to the wording of this thesis:

[In moving toward a possible knowledge of God] we do not perceive by an immediate intuition that God exists, nor do we prove it *a priori*. But we do prove it *a posteriori*, i.e., from the things that have been created, following an argument from the effects to the cause: namely, [1] from things which are moved and cannot be the adequate source of their motion, to a first unmoved mover; [2] from the production of the things in this world by causes subordinated to one another, to a first uncaused cause; [3] from corruptible things which equally might be or not be, to an absolutely necessary being; [4] from things which more or less are, live, and understand, according to degrees of being, living and understanding, to that which is maximally understanding, maximally living and maximally a being; finally, [5] from the order of all things, to a separated intellect which has ordered and organized things, and directs them to their end.<sup>278</sup>

Since the unity which we are to grasp and know is thus not immediately obvious to us in its entirety when we begin with the mere givens of our sensible experience (referring to that which initially we know in our various acts and data of sense), it is accordingly suggested to us or it is implied that the new unity which we can discover and come upon through our various acts of human knowing is found and discovered through a process which tends to take time (proceeding by a gradual process which encounters many difficulties, trials, and struggles). In the absence of immediacy within the experience or the progress of our human cognition, the manner of our knowing accordingly then points to a species of mediation which exists for us as different acts of cognition are combined with each other for the sake of moving toward an intended end, first acts of cognition being ordered to later acts of cognition in an arrangement or an ordering which, at the same time, points to a similar ordering which is found within the content of that which we have come to know about through our different acts of human cognition. A cognitive form of orientation (as we allude to its directedness or to its finality) points to the same kind of order which exists within a metaphysical order of things: an order of things that is known by us and which exists within a kind of being that is proportionate to our differing acts of human cognition although, admittedly, this same order differs from that which exists for us as the order of our human cognition if we should allude to an order in being which exists independently of whether or not it is being understood and known by us as cognitive human beings (when or as we exist as cogitating

---

papal documents can be alluded to which point to the normativity of the kind of teaching that comes to us from the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. Cf. Josef Neuner, "Decree on Priestly Formation," *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 2., ed. Herbert Vogrimler (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 371, as cited by Akinwale, p. 240. The footnote references which are cited by *Optatam totius* only refer to three instances of this prescriptive papal teaching in the context of three discourses: in a discourse given to seminarians by Pope Pius XII on June 24, 1939; an allocution given to the Pontifical Gregorian University of Studies by Pope Paul VI on March 12, 1964; and a second allocution that he gave on September 10, 1965 to the 6<sup>th</sup> International Thomistic Congress.

<sup>277</sup>In the footnote references which are officially cited, we have Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 2; *Contra gentiles*, 1, c. 12 and 31 and 3, c. 10-11; *De veritate*, q. 1 and 10, and *De potentia*, q. 4 and 7. Cf. [http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm#\\_ftn22](http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm#_ftn22) (accessed October 25, 2017).

<sup>278</sup>Cf. <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm> (accessed October 25, 2017).

human subjects). On the one hand, speculatively speaking, if we should argue that our natural or our unaided acts of human reasoning are, by their very nature, geared toward a knowledge of things that exist independently of whether or not we exist or function as cognitive, knowing subjects, then, from within this standpoint, we can hold and argue as a truism that “Truth and Being are convertible.”<sup>279</sup> The way that things are in our minds parallels or it reflects the way that things are in the things which are other than our individual minds.<sup>280</sup> Through truth, through apprehensions of truth, the order of that which exists or the order of that which simply is comes to exist (cognitively) within our human minds (within our human souls). The being which exists within our souls is joined to the being of things which are other than our souls. Conversely however, through the medium of our sensing experience, through the outer experience which exists for us in sense and through the inner experience which exists for us in our consciousness, the being of things which are other than ourselves (the being of things which are other than our human souls) can begin to enter into ourselves through the mediation of our subjectivity, through the mediation and being of our souls. The soul exists as a metaphysical principle; the subjectivity, as a cognitive or as a conscious principle.

However, from the standpoint of an alternative, complimentary approach, if we should notice and argue that, truly, our human acts of cognition exist as realities and that, in their own way, they would have to exist within an order of things which would have to refer to the reality of actually existing things, then, from the context of this standpoint, we would have to argue, in a manner which is not open to the disquiet of contradictions, that the kind of causality or the order which exists within the order of our human cognition is to be seen (it should be seen to exist) as a particular instance of causation: causation as this exists within a larger or a greater order of causation, one causation existing within another causation (a larger causation), or causation as it would exist within the larger, more general kind of causality which exists whenever we attend to the being of contingent things (things existing independently of whether or not, in any given case, a given order of causation among currently existing things is being directly known by us at any given time within the course of our human lives (within the context of our human history) although, on the other hand, the intelligibility of a causation which is not directly known by us through an act of understanding would be an intelligibility which would have to belong to another act of understanding: an act of understanding which transcends the kind of acts which we can have as human beings, intelligibilities in their immateriality existing always as realities which belong to acts of understanding, whether we should speak about our human acts of understanding or other acts of understanding which can exist as divine acts of understanding).<sup>281</sup>

So basic, in fact, is the thesis or the actuality of an intelligible, understood relation which exists between a cause and an effect that, in the end, within the order of our cognitive experience (as our proactive cognitive activity is joined to the activity of our cognitive receptivity), in the last analysis, we cannot prove or argue for the truth of this principle on the basis of grounds or reasons which would exist independently or apart from how, as a principle, causality is always operative within ourselves within the acts of inquiry and understanding which are constitutive of the kind of order or structure

---

<sup>279</sup>John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 8. See also Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 470; Patrick H. Byrne, “Teleology, Modern Science and Verification,” *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. 10, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Boston College, 1994), pp. 38-44.

<sup>280</sup>Milbank and Pickstock, p. 8.

<sup>281</sup>Milbank and Pickstock, p. 8.

which belongs to us as cogitating human beings, existing for us as the data of our consciousness (serving as phenomena or evidence for how we function in the manner of our human cognition). If, for instance, we advert to “why” and “what” questions that we are frequently asking and posing in our inquiries and if we are looking for an explanation that can indicate why we are asking these questions, our inquiry must suppose an ordering of elements which points to causation.<sup>282</sup> The causation is always operative and so the indemonstrability of causation, as a species of fundamental first principle, accordingly points to its primacy and to its inevitability and to how also, between relations of cause and effect and the being of contingent things, no separation is to be alluded to. Cause and effect always implies contingency and vice versa (one cannot think one without thinking the other) where, for instance, when we refer to the kind of order which exists within the ordering of causation, we should discover that, in its application and use, we always move from initial, undifferentiated apprehensions of being (or, in other words: dim apprehensions of being or *a priori*, prior apprehensions of being) toward apprehensions of being that are not lacking in parts or elements which have been distinguished from each other and which also fall into grades or classifications which point to an organization of things within being and the possible emergence of a new type of question which could possibly ask about why being, or existence, or the being of anything exists at all. Why is there being instead of non-being? Why being instead of nothing?

The being of contingent things and the order of contingently existing things begins to emerge thus as a species of relative (it loses its primacy or its absoluteness) as soon as we begin to ask questions about some kind of known unknown which could be viewed as a primary or primordial cause, as the ultimate source of all things, or as an explanation that is so comprehensive and perfect that, as an intelligibility and also as an intelligence, it is entirely lacking in any kind of restriction or degree of limitation. Hence, in the *Oath against Modernism*, in a manner which directly refers to the principle of causality: it is said about God that he, “God [is] the beginning and end of all things” and that, given what he is, he “can be known with certainty, by the natural light of reason, as a cause is known by its effects.”<sup>283</sup> That which is the beginning and end of all things (suggestively, the *telos* of all things) and as that which we can know about as we move from effects to causes is the same entity or the same “x” which meets a definition which is proposed or the meaning which we would have (as a result) if we should refer to the being of God and the kind of being which allegedly exists with respect to who is being referred to as God (so unlike any other kind of being or so unlike the kind of being which belongs to everything else which exists if, by God, we mean or we intend a point of origin which is to be understood as the source of being or as the very act of being, act of being being that which is the conferring of being or the conferring of existence to anything that would always involve a shift which must move from a condition of potency to a condition of act). If causality exists within the contingent world that we can adequately and properly know and understand through our human acts of cognition (the order and the contingency of our human acts of cognition revealing a like order and contingency of externally existing things), the rationality or the reasonableness of this causality points to an explanation for contingency which must exist as a species of necessary cause, a cause having a necessity which points to its absoluteness or, in other words, how it cannot exist in a way which would imply that it has been caused.<sup>284</sup>

---

282Spitzer, pp. 109-110.

283Pope Pius X, “Oath Against the Errors of Modernism,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 549-550, #2145; also cited by Ott, p. 15.

284Spitzer, pp. 112-113.

### **Transitioning from Understanding Natural Reason to an Understanding of Natural Law**

By way of a provisional conclusion, we discover or we have noted that, long before the Church's Magisterium has decided to speak about natural law (its nature and existence), it has spoken about the nature of our human existence with reference to the nature and the being of our human cognition. It is natural (we are natural and our cognition is natural) if it is set it apart and distinguished from considerations that would have to do with the question of grace and possible receptions of grace and an order of being which would refer to the possibilities of our human redemption as this would come to us from God, given who and what we are as human beings. The Church's Magisterium, in our own day, continues to speak about our natural human reason (reiterating previous positions, extending the meaning of previously stated teachings, and employing new conceptualities) although, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, since 1888 and the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII, with respect to the Church's papal Magisterium, these pronouncements and allusions have overlapped and mingled with each other in new presentations of church teaching that now speak about the being and the reality of natural law (the being of natural law has been admitted before anything has been said later about the nature or the intelligibility of natural laws).

These new teachings or, more accurately, we would have to admit that the articulation of these teachings has not occurred or it has not arisen from within the context of a void. From what the Church has taught about the nature of our human condition (the nature of our common humanity and the nature of our human cognition), within this specification of meaning, we have had a precondition (among other preconditions) which, together, have led to a later expansion of meaning and teaching which has occurred as we have moved into the being of natural law and the kind of articulation and explication which is needed if we should refer to the existence of natural laws and any possible determinations about how these laws would fit into a larger, grander scheme of things which exists for us when the Church's Magisterium speaks about the kind of world within which we happen to live within. If, within our human cognition, a species of self-transcendence is to be noticed and if, by this self-transcendence, we can be united to the intelligibility of other things or the natural law of other things (the intelligibility of a thing exists as the law of its being, a law which is natural because it is natural or appropriate to it), the greater or the ulterior object is an understanding which can speak more intelligently and more persuasively about how this world of ours is geared or how it is oriented toward a completion or a heightening of meaning and being which exists if we should refer to the being of supernatural realities, distinguishing between prior orders of being and meaning that exist *relatively* with respect to each other (in terms of how they align or exist with each other), and a later or a last order of being and meaning which exists *absolutely* with respect to all prior, relative orders of being and meaning (a last, ultimate order of being which would have to exist in an entirely unrestricted sense). This final, ultimate order is such thus that it has always existed (it has never emerged or it has never come into being) and at no time, can it ever be superseded or transcended by any new order of being which could exist at a higher level: one that would be more removed or more elevated. In itself, necessarily, it is more intelligible and indeed most intelligible; and as eminently or supremely intelligible, it would have to be intelligent as the source of itself in its being if, in its intelligibility, we think about an intelligibility that is not caused because, instead, it exists in its own right or, in other words, it causes itself. The primacy or the ultimacy points to an intelligence which is most intelligent.

Where, up to this time thus or up to this point in the unfolding of our discussion, according to a common form of usage, we have associated contingency with creation and the condition of being created (contingently existing things existing as created things or as created beings that have brought

into being through a transition that has moved from a condition of potency to a condition of act), a better, more accurate point of view would be to acknowledge an understanding which knows that, in talking about creation, we would have to employ a theological term or a theological concept which would have to point to a theological meaning or a theological understanding: from nothing (*ex nihilo*), as Creator, God has brought all things which are other than himself into a condition of being and existence which is entirely unique to God. Where, on the one hand, God as Creator is distinguished from God as Redeemer, it is however also true to admit that, if the created order is brought into a species of being which is, in some way, orientated to the kind of meaning and being which refers to the order of redemption (the redemptive order of things), then, for this reason, we can understand why, as follows, the Church proclaims and teaches a truth about the being of natural laws with respect to a kind of priority which belongs to the being of these laws (a priority or a primacy which exists in a relative manner):

Creation is the foundation of “all God's saving plans,” the “beginning of the history of salvation” that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”: from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ.<sup>285</sup>

Hence, as we move or as the Church has moved from the law of our natural human reason toward the laws of nature in general (toward that which exists as “natural law”), in moving through these orders of law, she has moved into a larger order of meaning and being. The law of our natural human reason exists within a more comprehensive law: within the more comprehensive law which exists and which refers (in general) to the laws of nature and, at the same time too, without contradiction, our natural human reason exists at or as a kind of apex, relative to the being of all natural laws which can be known by us through the actuations of our human reason, where, within this larger later context, our human reason is known in a way or in terms of how it is connected to a larger, vaster order of things which refers, in general, to the aforementioned laws of nature. In other words, through a preliminary kind of understanding, as we move toward an understanding of natural laws, we discover in natural laws an order of meaning and being which does not exist in a way which is totally separated or which is divorced from a larger scheme of things which would refer to the scheme or the order of our redemption and salvation: an order of salvation which includes both the order which exists within ourselves and also an order which is connected to ourselves but which exists or which transcends ourselves when we refer to the entire scope of naturally existing laws and everything which exists in a way that is informed by the being of natural laws (as they exist within the being of changing, contingent things). In other words, we refer to everything which has been brought into being *ex nihilo* through a kind of self-transcending act which exists with respect to the being of God and divine things, God as he exists and as He functions as the Creator of all things and as the Sustainer of all things, albeit, for the sake or for the purpose of uniting all these things to himself in a manner which works with causes which point to a created form of self-transcendence which exists within the being of a created order of things. The world, according to the order which exists within it, is a more incredible, wonderful place because, through causes that at times fail, through fallible exercises of freedom that exist among us as human beings, a greater more wonderful world is brought into being (it presents itself to ourselves and to God): God who is always working as the supreme, primary cause of all things

---

<sup>285</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), p. 73, #280; David P. Fleischacker, internet seminar, December 19, 2015.

but who works in combination with secondary causes which exist in all manner and species of condition, act, and actuation. Developments which exist within the created order of things belong to a greater story which is the story of salvation and redemption whose term is a full and an eventual union with God who is both the beginning of all things and the end of all things.