

## Two Kinds of Knowing

### I: -- Scientific Knowing

- [a] It arises as a subject investigates an object.  
The subject apprehends a thing; *someone* higher in the order of being investigates *something* lower.
- [b] It is acquired for the sake of using the object, controlling it, manipulating it; ultimately, *mastering* it.
- [c] It presupposes the natural intelligibility of the creaturely order, which intelligibility dovetails with the structures of empirical knowing within the human mind.

In sum, the knowing peculiar to science presupposes  
objectivity or detachment;  
that the scientific investigator stands over against the object;  
that the scientific investigator manipulates it for the sake of exploiting (using) it.

### II: -- Personal Knowing

- [a] It arises only through intimacy with a person.
- [b] It is never acquired for the sake of using another person. To use another person is to "thingify" that person and therefore not to know the *person* at all. To manipulate another person is simply evil. To master another person is to enslave.
- [c] It is not to acquire information about a person but rather *to be changed oneself by that person*.  
To know God is to be profoundly *altered* by God through having *encountered* him as *Person*.  
By extension, to "know pain" or "know hunger" is not to possess nutritional or neurological information ; it is to be so intimately acquainted with pain or hunger as to have been rendered forever *different*.
- [d] With respect to God it presupposes not a natural intelligibility but a grace-wrought bestowal of the capacity to know; i.e., we can know God only because he permits and facilitates this.  
With respect to fellow-humans, a creaturely parallel to grace is essential. We can know other humans only to the extent that they give themselves to us, open themselves to us, reveal themselves to us.

### III: -- How We Come To Know

- [a] scientifically: we act on an object so as to control it. *Domination* yields scientific knowledge.
- [b] personally: we surrender all attempts at control and expose ourselves *defencelessly* to someone else. *Vulnerability* yields personal knowledge.

#### IV: -- On Knowing and Being Known

Since we know another person only to the extent that our encounter has effected the profoundest changes within us (i.e., our knowledge of someone is precisely the *difference* that person has made within us as a result of our meeting him/her), we know God only to the extent that ....

But God also knows us. Then what change have we effected in him? Have we affected him at all?

To say the least, we have

- broken his heart,
- provoked his anger and mobilised his judgement,
- had him delay the day of condemnation and protract the day of grace. (Cf. Hosea)

God knows us so very thoroughly not because he's an extraordinary investigator but because he's utterly defenceless before us (the cross.)

With respect to our knowledge of God, consider

- "If you continue in my word, you will know the truth...." John 8:32

- "...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection." Phil. 3:10

- "Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully even as I am fully understood."

1 Cor. 13:12

#### **Martin Buber on Jean Paul Sartre**

Sartre maintains that since God infinitely transcends the creature, the creature is as thoroughly objectified as a stick or a stone. Even a "look" from God would be enough to "unperson" the human and render us sub-human. Therefore God has to be rejected if humankind is to *be*. Any "other" shrivels me. God is the "quintessence" of the other.

Buber maintains

[1] God is not the quintessence of the other "but rather its absoluteness." *Eclipse of God*, 67

[2] This absoluteness is not the relation of subject (Subject) over against object, "but rather the reciprocal relation of I and Thou." *Eclipse*, 68 God never becomes an object for us (he doesn't permit us this); neither do we ever become objects to God (he refuses this.)

[3] Sartre "holds the subject-object relation to be the primary and exclusive relation between beings. He does not see the original and decisive relation between I and Thou, compared with which the subject-object relation is only a classifying elaboration." *Eclipse*, 69