

Lesson 3: God and Empirical Logic

Without doubt, social circumstances, historical and educational factors, and the various forms of human labor cannot be without influence on the practical expression of man's inward inclinations and his spiritual and emotional characteristics.

Although these various circumstances do not create any compulsion or necessity in man's choice of direction, they may bring into being a more suitable environment for a certain kind of choice, thus playing an important role in men's view of things. These circumstances may even sometimes display themselves in the guise of obstacles to man's freedom and ability to choose.

As a result of greater familiarity with scientific and empirical deduction, the human mind tends naturally to shy away somewhat from purely intellectual deduction, particularly if the matter under investigation is non-material and insensible.

In general, man's mental faculties acquire strength and skill in the area to which they are most applied: matters lying outside that area appear to him unreal or unauthentic, or, at best, secondary or tangential to the matter in which he specializes. Man, therefore, tends to judge everything in a particular way.

One of the most destructive and misleading factors in thoughts concerning God is to restrict one's thought to the logic of the empirical sciences and to fail to recognize the limits and boundaries of that logic. Since the specialists in the empirical sciences devote all their mental energy to the sensory sciences, they are alien to matters that lie beyond sense perception.

This alienation, this distance from non-sensory matters, this extraordinary trust in the data yielded by the empirical sciences, reaches such a point that testing and experimentation form the whole mental structure and world view of such specialists. They regard experimentation as the only acceptable tool and means of cognition, as the sole criterion. They expect it to solve every problem.

The function of the sciences is to explain the relationships between phenomena; their aim is to establish the connection between events, not between God and events. In the experimental sciences, man is not at all concerned with God. One should not expect to be able to perceive supra-sensory realities by

means of sensory criteria, or to see God in a laboratory. The sciences cannot carry out a laboratory experiment on the existence of God and then reach the verdict that if a thing is not physically observable and it cannot be established by means of laboratory experiment and mathematical calculation, it, therefore, has no reality.

In fact, no experiment can be set up to determine whether a non-material being exists or not, because only that which can be negated by means of experiment can be proven by means of experiment. Science and metaphysics are two forms of knowledge which enjoy equal degrees of validity and authenticity. A meta-physical law neither arises from experimentation nor can it be negated by experimentation. Thousands of scientific experiments are designed to prove that all things are material; they will all fall short of their goal.

The empirical scientist has the right to say, "I have found such- and-such," or "I have not found such- and-such." He does not have the right to say, "Such-and-such a thing does not exist."

Laboratory methods, for all their complexity and advanced state of development, cannot find their way through the unknown, dark and expansive world of the elements that is the object of experimentation; they cannot understand all the realities hidden in the heart of the infinite atoms; and, they cannot even discover the true nature of matter.

The empirical method has been very useful in developing man's awareness of the precise order of creation, and, it may provide a clear and novel basis for belief in the Lord through its investigation of the order of creation, for it indicates the existence of a conscious and powerful Creator. However, the aim and purpose of scientists in their researches and investigations into questions of nature and the mysteries of the world is generally not to perceive the Creator of existence.

In the course of its continuous development at the hands of researchers, science is constantly uncovering the mysteries of existence without the scientists emerging, by means of their science, from the narrow and restricted knowledge given them by the current stage of their researches. If they were to do so, they would realize the connectedness of phenomena and the subordination of all things to a given order, and, thus, attaining two additional stages of knowledge and insight.

First, they would be able to correlate all their sensory, empirical data, and then they would be able to draw rational conclusions and make interpretations. Without admitting the existence of a wise Creator, it is impossible to interpret convincingly the totality of the varied data yielded by the different sciences and the connections existing among them.

Practically, however, the work and the method of scientific thought is to formulate principles and undertake research without reference to God, so that a system of thought from which God is absent becomes the axis on which scientific work turns, causing man to be alienated from whatever lies beyond the scope of that thought.

At the same time, man's practical life is inevitably connected with the sciences. The results yielded by empirical knowledge embrace all the material aspects of life, imprisoning man within their four impenetrable walls, and it is hardly possible to find any natural tool among the means of man's life.

This necessarily increases man's trust in the sciences and affects his behavior, inducing in him a state of doubt and hesitation.

In addition, the beneficial nature of the phenomena investigated by empirical science is tangible and aware to everyone, in sharp contrast to metaphysical questions. Similarly, the material phenomena investigated by empirical science are well-known, whereas the opposite is true in the case of metaphysics.

The presentation of religious questions in the incorrect method followed by the medieval church, combined with enmity to all manifestations of science, was the most important factor in making empirical science appear preferable to philosophical and meta-physical concerns. In short, science appeared to be opposed to religion, not parallel to it.

Once empirical logic succeeded in pouring all thoughts into its own mould, it colored men's outlook on the world to such a degree that they were convinced that it was the only basis for accepting the truth of a thing. They assigned it supreme authority and considered it impossible to prove the existence of anything imperceptible to the senses.

So the empirical scientist, who is unaware of the method of those who know God, accepts and regards as proper, in the course of his life, whatever is compatible with scientific logic and thought. He grants himself the right to deny whatever is incompatible with his scientific method. His method is absolute trust in the experiment and regarding it as the sole proof for the correctness of any deduction.

In such a situation, when the whole basis of religious thought is ignored, the scientist finds himself without any principles for interpreting those secondary religious questions which appear in the form of commands and prohibitions. Being totally accustomed to the language of science and dependent on formulae, he is utterly committed to his own method and imagines the binding, simple and straightforward commands of religion to be without content or value.

This manner of thought is faulty and incorrect. Although the sciences have complex and extraordinarily precise formulae, the comprehension of which requires profound and difficult study, those same formulae leave the realm of science once they enter our practical lives, distancing themselves from the technical language of the scientists. Were this not to be the case, they would be restricted to scientific and industrial centers, libraries and centers of research.

Everyone can make use of such facilities as the telephone and the radio. The same holds true of all scientific tools and instruments. For all their precision and complexity, a little specialized instruction will enable anyone to use them. The specialist and the expert do not pass on their mechanical, technical

knowledge to the purchasers of the device; instead, they summarize in a few short sentences the result of the toils endured by the inventors.

It is, therefore, unfair and incompatible with scientific logic to attempt to force the commands of religion (which cannot be compressed into a scientific formula, being both simple and universal) into the mould of one's own incorrect prejudices and imaginings, and then pronounce them worthless and insignificant, while ignoring their decisive role and their profound effects in our life. Practical instructions bear their fruit when they are proclaimed in a generally comprehensible language and become tangible for everyone in individual and social life.

Furthermore, if it were supposed that the commands and instructions of religions should be determined by our cognition, understanding and taste, there would be no need for revelation and Prophets; we could construct our own religions.

Man often overlooks his weaknesses, preoccupied as he is with his strengths. The science worshipper of the contemporary world is so proud of his knowledge as a result of the progress that has been attained in the experimental sciences that he imagines himself to have conquered and triumphantly taken possession of the world of truth. But nobody has ever been able to claim that he has attained knowledge of all the mysteries of the universe and removed all the veils from the world of nature.

One must take a broader view of reality and realize how slight is one's own drop of knowledge when compared to the ocean of hidden mysteries that confronts us. In the wake of every scientific discovery, a further series of unknowns comes into view.

Throughout the centuries that man has untiringly labored with all his resources to know the world as fully as possible, the only result of his exertions has been the discovery of a few among the many mysteries of the universe. Only a few short steps have been taken on this path, and there is a whole mass of unknowns clustered around human knowledge like a cloud.

One must, therefore, assess more realistically the cognitive scope of the sensory sciences and their proper area of activity and influence. All preconceptions that are like barriers on the path to truth must be discarded in favor of a correct analysis.

Without doubt, the empirical sciences can inform us only of the external aspects of phenomena; it is only matter and material phenomena that come within the scope of their study and are susceptible to laboratory experimentation. The method of the sciences in attaining their goal, while seeking to benefit from each slight increment in knowledge, is observation and experiment.

Since the fundamental concern of the empirical sciences is the investigation of the external world, in order to be sure that a certain scientific theory is correct, we must compare it with the external world to test it. If the external world effectively verifies it, we accept it; if it does not, we do not accept it. So, considering the object and the method of the empirical sciences, we must ask whether metaphysical

truths are subject to sensory test and experimentation? Does any empirical enquiry have the right to intervene in matters of faith and belief? Is any part of the experimental sciences concerned with God?

To discover the correctness or incorrectness of a matter in the empirical sciences, it is necessary to make use of change and of the elimination of given factors and circumstances. This method is not applicable to the eternal, immutable and supra-material divine existence.

Material knowledge is a lamp that can illumine certain unknown matters with its rays but it is not a lamp that can eliminate all darkness. For the knowledge of a system is dependent on comprehension of the whole in its totality and a form of cognition that can unite all partial insights in itself, resulting in a total vision.

Now, to imprison human knowledge in the narrow, restrictive confines of the sensory sciences cannot bring man to a total vision, but only to an awareness of empirical phenomena combined with an unawareness of the inner dimension of being.

Whether we believe in God or not has, in fact, no connection with the empirical sciences, because since the object of their investigations is matter, the sciences that concern themselves with material phenomena do not have the right to express themselves affirmatively or negatively concerning any non-material subject.

According to the belief of religious schools of thought, God is not a body. He cannot be perceived by the senses. He transcends time and place. He is a being Whose existence is not subject to temporal limitation and place cannot restrict him. He is, therefore, free of need and exalted in His essence above any kind of deficiency. He knows the inner as well as the outer aspect of the universe; the world lies open before Him.

Finally, He possesses the highest degree of every perfection and is loftier than whatever concerning Him might come to man's mind. We cannot possibly know the ground of His essence, given the inadequacy of ourselves and of our powers, faculties and instruments of discernment.

For this reason, if you study all the books of empirical science, you will not find the slightest mention of an experiment concerning God or any judgment offered concerning God.

Even if we do regard sense perception as the only means for discovering reality, we cannot prove, relying on sense perception, that nothing exists beyond the world of the senses. Such an assertion would, in itself, be non-empirical, resting on no sensory or empirical proof.

Even if the followers of a religious school of thought had no proofs for their claim, to conclude firmly and forcibly that non-being reigns beyond the sensory realm would be a non-scientific choice, based on imagination and speculation. Some people try to propagate this fantasy in the garb of science and to present their choice as having been dictated by scientific thought. In the final analysis, however, the

denial involved in such an assertion is unworthy of science and philosophy, and even contradicts empirical logic.

In *The Elementary Principles of Philosophy*, Georges Pultzer says, "To imagine a thing that does not occupy time and space and is immune to change and development is an impossibility."

It is plain that these words reflect a way of thought that does not know what it is searching for. If it knew what it was looking for, it would also understand how to look for it.

Since the activity of this mode of thought revolves around nature and the sensory realm, it will naturally regard as impossible whatever lies beyond the scope of its activity and the existence of which cannot be proven by way of sensory experiment. It will regard belief in such an entity as contrary to the scientific mode of thought. However, scholars in the natural sciences are confronted with a whole mass of unknowns concerning this very earth and tangible, lifeless matter, even though they are constantly in touch with it (apart from which the material universe, with its countless mysteries and secrets, does not consist simply of this globe on which we live).

Such scholars have, then, the right only to say, "Since the supernatural realm lies beyond the scope of my professional tools, I remain silent and cannot utter a denial." How could they permit themselves to make a claim that would necessitate knowledge as extensive as the scheme of the universe, when their knowledge of the total scheme of being is close to zero?

What proof exists to substantiate the claim that being is equivalent to matter and that the whole world of being consists of material entities? What scientist rejecting metaphysics has ever been able to found his denial on logic or proof, or to furnish evidence that beyond absolute non-being, nothing exists outside the seen realm?

Although science does not explicitly and definitively reject every unknown thing simply because it can have no access to it by means of its tools and instruments, patiently awaiting instead the day when it should be discovered, materialists do not even approach the question of the existence of God with doubt and hesitation; on the basis of their erroneous and hasty prejudices, they pronounce their judgment that the Creator does not exist.

Such persons establish certain criteria and standards for themselves and are not prepared to apply a different criterion established for a definite purpose in a given area. For example, they would never use the criteria applicable to a surface to measure a body, but when it comes to measuring the supra-sensory world, they try to measure God, the spirit, and inspiration, with the same tools they use to measure the material world. When they find themselves unable to gain any knowledge of the entities in question, they proceed to deny their existence.

Now, if a person imprisoned in empirical logic desires to accept the reality of the universe only to the extent permitted him by sensory experience and to deny whatever lies beyond that, he must recognize that this is a path he has chosen for himself; it is not the result of scientific investigation and experiment.

This kind of pseudo-intellectualism arises from intellectual rebellion and an abandonment of one's original nature. The god that the natural scientist wishes vainly to "prove" with his tools and instruments is, in any event, no god at all in the view of those who worship God.

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