

Session 10: The Contradictions of Atheism

HYMN: Praise to the Lord



Praise to the Lord, the almighty,
 the King of creation!
 O my soul, praise Him, for He is
 your life and salvation!
 Come, all who hear: now to His altar
 draw near,
 joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things
 so gloriously reigning!
 Shelt'ring you under His wings, and
 so gently sustaining.
 Have you not seen? All that is
 needful has been
 sent by His gracious ordaining!

Praise to the Lord, Who will prosper
 your work and defend you!
 Surely His goodness and mercy shall
 daily attend you!
 Ponder anew what the almighty can
 do,
 if with His love He befriend you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that
 is in me adore Him!
 All that has life and breath, come
 now with praises before Him!
 Let the "Amen" sound from His people
 again —
 gladly with praise we adore Him!

PRAYER: See Eph 1:17-19.

Let us pray: O God,
 grant us a spirit
 of wisdom and insight
 to know You clearly.
 Enlighten our innermost vision,
 that we may know the great hope
 to which You have called us,
 the wealth of Your glorious heritage
 to be distributed
 among the members of the Church,
 and the immeasurable scope
 of Your power
 in us who believe.
 Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your Son,
 Who lives and reigns with You
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 God, for ever and ever.
 — Amen

READING: Rom 1:18-22
 A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to
 the Romans

The wrath of God
 is being revealed from Heaven
 against the irreligious
 and perverse spirit of men who,
 in this perversity of theirs,
 hinder the truth.

In fact,
 whatever can be known about God
 is clear to them;
 He Himself made it so.
 Since the creation of the world,
 invisible realities,
 God's eternal power and divinity,
 have become visible,
 recognized
 through the things He has made.

Therefore
 these men are inexcusable.
 They certainly had knowledge of God,
 yet they did not glorify Him as God
 or give Him thanks;
 they stultified themselves
 through speculating to no purpose,
 and their senseless hearts
 were darkened.

They claimed to be wise,
 but turned into fools instead.
 The Word of the Lord
 — *Thanks be to God*

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

An atheist believes
 that God does not exist.
 He explicitly rejects
 the intimate and vital bond
 between God and humans.

Some atheists are materialists,
 restricting their needs
 and aspirations
 to this world.
 Others are humanists,
 looking only
 for social and economic liberation. —

Session 10

Atheism is often based
on a false idea of human autonomy,
exaggerated to the point
of refusing any dependence on God.

An agnostic does not necessarily
deny God's existence,
but he does not perceive
God's intimate and vital bond
with humans.

BIBLE READING

2 Sm 15-24

In this week's Bible Reading
David took a census of his people.
He found 1.3 million men
"fit for military service."

In itself,
counting people is not wrong.
However, David displeased God,
for his census showed
that he was relying on his warriors
rather than on God.

Next week,
we will see that there is indeed
"A Place For Science
in the Catholic Faith."
Science is good,
part of the dominion over the earth
that God gave Adam and Eve.

However, we must never forget
that it is God
Who not only creates all things,
but also, and at every moment,
upholds and sustains them in being,
enables them to act,
and brings them to their final end.

It is He Whom we must thank
for everything,
as David says
in his final song of thanksgiving.

The Contradictions of Atheism

Introduction

Ever since people have been able to think, they have given two different accounts of what the universe really is and how it came to be.

First, the *religious* account. A *theist*¹ believes that there is something behind or beyond or outside the universe, which made the universe. It is more like a mind than anything else: that is, it is conscious, and it has purposes and preferences. In fact, it is more like *someone* than *something*. We call it God.

Second, the *atheist*² account. An atheist believes that there is no God. An atheist is perforce a *materialist*,³ or, more precisely, a *naturalist*.⁴ He believes that the ultimate Fact, the thing you cannot go behind or beyond or outside, is the universe: a vast process in space and time which is going on, and always has gone on — he thinks — of its own accord, with nothing outside it.

If a naturalist has to account for a thing or an event in the universe, he does so by referring to other things and events in the universe, not to anything outside. Everything, he thinks, can be observed, studied, and, in principle, perfectly understood, by the methods of science,⁵ for all things and events in the universe fall into *patterns* that give rise to what we call *cause-and-effect*.⁶

How do we decide which account is true — the theist's or the atheist's?

We cannot decide by scientific methods, for science is concerned only with things in the universe that can be observed by means of the five senses⁷ and with ideas⁸ that can be deduced from observations and checked against other observations. If there *is* anything *behind* the universe, science cannot reveal it; we will have to remain ignorant of it or discover it in some other way.⁹

Now many people think that the religious and the atheist accounts of the universe are equally valid. They think that God is an optional extra. "You can believe in Him if you like," they say, "but we can settle the practical problems of everyday life without Him."

Even religious people have become imbued with this idea. That is why some Catholic politicians promise not to let their religion influence their vote.¹⁰ That is why some parents leave it to their children to find out about God on their own and believe in Him if they want to.

1 From the Greek *theos* ("god"): a person who believes in one God, Creator of all that is.

2 From the Greek *atheos* ("god-denying").

3 *Materialism* is the theory that all reality is only matter, or a function of matter, or ultimately derived from matter.

4 *Naturalism* is the theory that the only reality is nature.

5 Science predicts future events from the initial conditions, using the patterns scientists find in their observations. See the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith."

6 Every particular event (such as this talk) is caused by some other event, and, in the long run, by the Total Event; every particular thing (such as this room) is one effect of the Whole System. Accordingly, "every single thing should be such that we see, in general, how it could be explained in terms of the Total System. If any one thing exists which is of such a kind that we see in advance the impossibility of ever giving it *that* kind of explanation, then Naturalism [is] in ruins. If necessities of thought force us to allow any one thing any degree of independence from the Total System — if any one thing makes good a claim to be on its own, to be something more than an expression of the character of Nature as a whole — then we have abandoned Naturalism" (C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, III).

7 Seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling.

8 Scientists call them "laws," "models," or "theories," where "theory" denotes not uncertainty, but rather an idea as distinct from an observation; e.g., the "theory of music" and "probability theory."

9 "Supposing science ever became so complete that it knew every single thing in the whole universe. Is it not plain that the questions *Why is there a universe? Why does it go on as it does? Has it any meaning?* would remain just as they were?" (C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book I, 4).

10 This is different from the "separation of church and state" provided for in the first amendment to the American constitution — "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." That clause ensures that no religion in the United States shall have the "established" status of the Anglican Church in England, opposition to which had prompted the founding of many of the original 13 British colonies: Massachusetts by the Puritans; Rhode Island by Roger Williams, who had been expelled from Massachusetts for religious dissent; Connecticut by Puritans from Massachusetts; Pennsylvania by the Quaker William Penn; and Maryland by Catholics. In fact, the majority of those founders — more than 100 — were Christians, and the language of the Declaration of Independence is Deist — e.g. "Nature's God" and "the Creator." Their intention was to ban religion (not God) from government (not society).

In this talk, we want to show that the atheist view of the universe is *not* viable, for it cannot, even *in principle*, account for two phenomena we are all familiar with: one is *our sense of right and wrong*, and another is *our ability to reach truth by reasoning*.¹¹ Atheism's inability to account for the second, especially, makes it intellectually self-destructive and puts it right out of the question for thinking people.

Law of Right and Wrong

When the Russians invaded Ukraine in 2022, everyone said that what they were doing was wrong, from the heads of countries at the United Nations to people on the street all over the world. The same thing happened in 1939, when the Germans marched into what was then Czechoslovakia.

Those who protested were not saying merely that they did not like the way Russia and Germany were behaving. They were appealing to a standard of behaviour that they expected the Russians and the Germans to know and admit. Accordingly, both Putin in Russia and Hitler in Germany tried to justify their behaviour by claiming that they were uniting the people who spoke their language.

A similar thing happens in everyday life. When one person accuses another of jumping to the head of a line, the one who is accused hardly ever replies, "Why shouldn't I?" Nearly always he tries to establish that he had just stepped out of the line for a moment and was simply resuming his place, or that there is some special reason why he should go first.

It looks as though both the accuser and the accused have in mind some law or rule or code of conduct about which they agree. That is why they quarrel. They each try to show that the other is in the wrong, and that would be impossible if they did not agree about what constitutes "wrong." It would be like trying to establish whether or not a soccer player had committed a foul when there is no agreement about the rules of soccer.

The Law to which accuser and accused both appeal used to be called the Law of Nature, because people thought that everyone knew it by nature, without being taught. They knew that you might find the odd person who did not know it, like a person who is colour-blind or tone-deaf; but they thought that on the whole, the human idea of right and wrong was obvious to everyone.

To sum up: people in all times and places have appealed to a Law of Right and Wrong that they think everybody knows, *even if they do not, in fact, obey it*. "They know the Law of Nature; they break it," says C.S. Lewis. "These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in."¹²

Now people have tried to explain our sense of right and wrong in various ways.

Not just an instinct

Some people think that it is just an instinct, like mother-love, or the sexual instinct, or the fighting instinct, or the instinct for food, or the instinct for self-preservation.

Now when we are prompted by instinct, we feel a strong urge or desire to act in a certain way. For example, if we hear a cry for help from a drowning man, we probably feel two instinctive urges: 1) to give help and 2) to stay out of danger. Either might be stronger.

But quite apart from these, we are conscious of a third thing, which tells us to follow the instinct to give help and suppress the instinct to run away, even if the urge to stay out of danger is stronger. That third thing is our sense of right and

11 Others are "the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again of aesthetic and religious experience," none of which can be observed by the methods of the natural sciences, but rather fall "within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection" and require theology to bring out their "ultimate meaning according to the Creator's plans" (Pope John Paul II: *Reflection on Science at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, 6; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 1).

12 C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book I, 1

wrong.

Our sense of right and wrong is different from an instinct in two ways:

1) Instincts point to what we *want* to do, while our sense of right and wrong points to what we *ought* to do. Our sense of right and wrong judges between instincts and tells us which instinct to encourage.

2) Instincts always urge the same kind of behaviour, while our sense of right and wrong does not. For example, the instinct of self-preservation always urges us to save our lives; the sexual instinct always urges us to gratify our sexual desires. But our sense of right and wrong tells a civilian to suppress his fighting instinct and a soldier to follow it; it tells a man to gratify his sexual instinct with respect to his wife but deny it with respect to other women. In some circumstances, a sense of right and wrong tells a mother to encourage her instinct to defend her child; in others, it tells her to suppress that instinct and report her child to the police.

No; our sense of right and wrong cannot be just an instinct.

Not an arbitrary convention

Some people think that the Law of Right and Wrong is just an arbitrary human convention — an artificial agreement — which could equally well be quite different.¹³ That, they claim, is why we have to be taught it.

Some of the things we have to be taught *are* like this. For example, we all have to be taught to keep to the right on the road; but it could equally well be the left, as it is in England.

However, not everything we have to be taught is like that. We all have to be taught the multiplication table, but it is not something we have made up for ourselves, and we could not equally well say that two times three is five. We all have to be taught to brush our teeth, but it is not something that could just as well be left out of our education. It could, of course, but our teeth would decay.

There are three reasons why right and wrong cannot be arbitrary human conventions.

1) Arbitrary conventions vary, like the conventions that surround the wearing of hats. However, as a matter of observable fact, the Law of Right and Wrong has been very much the same in all times and places. The moral teachings of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans are strikingly similar.¹⁴

People differ about whether you ought to consider everyone else before yourself, or just your own family, or just your fellow-countrymen, but they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. They differ about how many wives you may have, but they have always agreed that you should not simply take any woman you like.

2) We cannot expel the Law from our thought no matter how hard we try. We can banish certain aspects of it — for example, many people in our society have banished "Thou shalt not commit adultery" — but there are always aspects that we retain and expect other people to retain.

For example, I knew a very honest man who believed that we are all free to choose our own values — our own ideas of right and wrong. But there is one law he thought everyone should observe: "Thou shalt respect everyone else's values."

He obviously tried hard not to be negative or "judgemental" when he told me that his niece was "married" to another woman and that their two children were the result of artificial insemination with sperm from an unknown man — but he gave himself away by adding, "At least they're not hurting anyone." It seems that there was another law he thought everyone should observe: "Thou shalt not hurt anyone."

Even people who maintain that all values are "personal"¹⁵ or "relative" usually

13 Accordingly, they say "appropriate" and "inappropriate" rather than "right" and "wrong."

14 See Appendix 1.

15 Meaning "different for each person."

have some things they think *absolutely* wrong, like the destruction of the World Trade Centre or the sexual abuse of children. Even when they argue that nothing is absolutely or objectively wrong, they ordinarily behave and talk as though some things are. In fact, those who hold that there are *no* absolute values insist that it is *absolutely* wrong to impose one's values on others!

3) The idea of inventing or choosing our own set of values — our own Law of Right and Wrong — is inherently self-contradictory. For when we have stepped outside all value-systems in order to choose between them, what grounds can we have for thinking that one is "better" than another? Unless we speak from within a value-system, we can only exalt the values we happen to like.¹⁶

No; the Law of Right and Wrong is not something we invented and we cannot change it. We have to be taught it, but, as Aristotle said, the aim of education in the moral values is to make us like and dislike what we already *ought* to like and dislike.¹⁷

Not just liking and disliking

Some people think that "right" and "wrong" are just more emphatic ways of saying "likable" and "unlikable," or "acceptable" and "unacceptable."

That may be true by coincidence, but not all the time. Suppose one man gets to the theatre first and takes the best seat, while another gets there after me and removes the coat I have put on the best seat to save it for myself. I dislike both actions, but I claim that the man who removed my coat did something wrong, while the other man did not.

Or suppose one man accidentally trips me up, while a second tries to trip me up but fails. I dislike what the first man did much more, but I blame him much less than the second man.

Or consider the status of a traitor. In a war, the officials of an enemy government may welcome his behaviour, but they nevertheless despise him.¹⁸

No; what we call right or wrong behaviour in other people is *not* simply the behaviour that we like or dislike. And it is pretty obvious that the right kind of behaviour in *ourselves* is not simply what we like or what pays.¹⁹

Not just preserving the race

16 "When men say 'I ought.' they certainly think they are saying something, and something true, about the nature of the proposed action, and not merely about their own feelings. But if Naturalism is true, 'I ought' is the same sort of statement as 'I itch' or 'I'm going to be sick.' In real life, when a man says 'I ought.' we may reply, 'Yes. You're right. That is what you ought to do,' or else, 'No. I think you're mistaken.' But in a world of Naturalists (if Naturalists really remembered their philosophy out of school) the only sensible reply would be, 'Oh, are you?' All moral judgements would be statements about the speaker's feelings, mistaken by him for statements about something else (the real moral quality of actions) which does not exist."

"The Naturalist can, if he chooses, brazen it out. He can say, 'Yes. I quite agree that there is no such thing as wrong and right. I admit that no moral judgement can be 'true' or 'correct' and, consequently, that no one system of morality can be better or worse than another. All ideas of good and evil are hallucinations — shadows cast on the outer world by the impulses which we have been conditioned to feel.' Indeed, many Naturalists are delighted to say this.

"But then they must stick to it; and fortunately (though inconsistently) most real Naturalists do not. A moment after they have admitted that good and evil are illusions, you will find them exhorting us to work for posterity, to educate, revolutionize, liquidate, live, and die for the good of the human race."

"Do they remember ... that when they tell us we 'ought to make a better world,' the words 'ought' and 'better' must, on their own showing, refer to an irrationally conditioned impulse which cannot be true or false any more than a vomit or a yawn?"

"My idea is that sometimes they do forget. That is their glory. Holding a philosophy which excludes humanity, they yet remain human. At the sight of injustice they throw all their Naturalism to the winds and speak like men and like men of genius. They know far better than they think they know" (C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, V).

17 Then, when we are old enough to understand, we will easily assimilate the reasons; otherwise we will not be able even to perceive them (see Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, Chapter 3, Section 2).

18 In his *La Commedia Divina: Inferno*, Dante Alighieri portrayed Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and Brutus, who betrayed Julius Caesar, in the innermost circle of Hell.

19 "It can mean being content with thirty dollars when you might have got fifty, doing school work honestly when it would be easy to cheat, leaving a girl alone when you would like to seduce her, staying in a dangerous place when you could go somewhere safer, keeping promises you would rather not keep, and telling the truth even when it makes you look a fool (C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book I, 3).

Finally, some people say that Nature has conditioned us to call it "right" to keep promises, help our neighbours, *etc.* because this is the kind of behaviour that will ultimately preserve the human race. As evidence, they point out that, with this idea of right and wrong, the human race has in fact survived.

But we cannot attribute our survival to our sense of right and wrong for, in general, we have *not* kept the Law; and what we think we ought to do is irrelevant to our survival if we do not actually do it.

(Does Nature, in fact, *want* to preserve the human race? On the contrary, species seem to last for a while and then disappear, like the dinosaurs, and make way for others. Why should we prefer our own species to the one that will follow us, if there is one?)

In any case, the Law of Right and Wrong is not directed toward the preservation of the species. For example, it might command that an entire army submit to slaughter. And if the last woman left on earth after a nuclear war happened to be a nun, it would still dictate "Thou shalt keep thy vows."

Intellectual impossibility

Our sense of right and wrong, then, is not just instinct, convention, what we like, or what will preserve the human race. And if we treat it as if it is, we run into an insurmountable intellectual difficulty.

To see this, consider a very simple, very formal example of reasoning: "All chairs have seats. This object is a chair. Therefore this object has a seat."

Philosophers call this chain of reasoning a *syllogism*. The first two statements are the *premises*; the last one is the *conclusion*.²⁰

Without premises, no reasoning is possible. We have to assume something to be true, or nothing else can ever be known. Certain *axioms* have to be accepted as given.²¹

Notice that in the syllogism above, the premises are about *fact* and so is the conclusion.²² Now it is a principle of logic that *from factual premises, only factual conclusions can be drawn*; it is logically impossible to draw a conclusion that *commands* something or describes what *ought* to happen.²³

For example, consider the following: "Dropping bombs kills people. This object is a bomb. Therefore you ought not to drop this object."

It is an *invalid* syllogism because, while the premises are about what *is*, the conclusion is about what *should be*.²⁴ Anyone who wants to draw this conclusion has to smuggle in the additional premise "You ought not to kill people," which is not about *fact* but about *ethics* or *morals* or right and wrong.²⁵

Atheists argue illogically in just this way when they claim that the Law of Right and Wrong, which tells us what we *ought to do*, is derived from instinct, which tells us what we *want to do*, or convention, which tells us what everybody *does do*.

For example, instinct supplies premises like "I want to stay alive"; convention supplies premises like "everybody tells lies." But for me to conclude that I *ought* to act so as to stay alive or that I *ought* to tell a lie, I would need the additional *ethical* premise "I ought to do what I want" or "I ought to do what everybody else does."

Without ethical premises, no ethical conclusions are possible. If you start, ethically, with a blank slate, you end, ethically, with a blank slate. Anything else is, logically, an impossibility. As in factual reasoning, there are certain ethical *axioms*

20 Once established, a conclusion can become the premise in a new syllogism: for example, "This object has a seat. All objects with seats are made for sitting. Therefore this object is made for sitting."

21 As in Euclid's geometry.

22 A grammarian would say that all the verbs are in the *indicative mood*: "have," "is," and "has."

23 A grammarian would say that conclusions in the imperative or subjunctive mood cannot be drawn from premises in the indicative mood.

24 The verbs in the premises — "kills" and "is" — are in the indicative mood, while the verb in the conclusion — "ought" — is in the subjunctive mood.

25 You can try to make it sound as though it is about fact by re-phrasing it — "It is not right to kill people" — but then you have to smuggle in another premise: "You ought to do what is right."

that must be accepted as given.²⁶

Where the Law comes from

Atheists account for the moral axioms by saying that they developed naturally, like our instincts.

Now our instincts developed, scientists tell us, by a process of elimination. For example, any individual, race, or species that did not possess the fighting instinct would never fight and would be wiped out by those who did possess it; any that did not possess the sexual instinct would never reproduce and would soon vanish.

But the moral axioms *cannot* have developed in this way. Only our actual behaviour, like fighting and reproducing, can have influenced our survival; the Moral Law, which describes how we *should have behaved* (but often did not), cannot have had anything to do with it.²⁷

Unlike atheists (who account for everything in the universe by referring only to other things and events in the universe), Catholics believe that there is Someone outside the universe: God, Who made all that is, visible and invisible.

And Catholics say that the moral axioms are reflections of God's nature²⁸ — divine nature — which God implanted in our minds from the very beginning because He planned to make us divine.²⁹

However, when Adam and Eve fell, our wills became perverted and our reason obscured. In our fallen state, we needed to be reminded of the Law and have it fully explained to us.³⁰

Accordingly, God gave us reminders of the moral axioms. We call them the Ten Commandments.³¹ "God wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts," St. Augustine said.³²

* * * * *

Reasoning

Our sense of right and wrong, then, is compelling evidence that the atheistic, materialistic, naturalistic view of the universe is untrue. Now let us consider our ability to discover truth by reasoning.

There are only two things in the universe which we can know *directly*: our own *sensations* (like pain, hunger, heat, and cold) and our own *emotions* (like anger, joy, fear, and regret). Anything else we know, we know *indirectly*.

For example, when I claim to know *you*, I mean that a certain *idea* or *image* of you is present in my mind, not you yourself.³³ It is by means of that idea or image that I know you.³⁴

The ideas and images that we have of everything outside ourselves are *inferred* or *deduced* from our sensations and emotions by *reasoning*, or *rational thinking*. It is by reason that we *see* or *grasp* or *apprehend* or *comprehend* or *know* or *understand* anything other than our own sensations and emotions: things like "you are sitting there," or "nine sevens are sixty-three," or "Mount Everest is higher than Grouse Mountain," or "Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in 1953."

The classic example of reasoning is the syllogism,³⁵ but reasoning is hardly ever

26 Philosophers distinguish between *reason*, where both conclusion and premises are in the indicative mood, and *practical reason*, where the conclusion and at least one premise are in the imperative or subjunctive mood.

27 Actually, the process of elimination describes not the origin of the instincts we have, but only the destruction of others. Even so, it cannot account for our ethical values.

28 How God does behave is how we ought to behave.

29 See the talk on "Creation and the Fall."

30 See the talks on "The First Three Commandments" and "The Last Seven Commandments."

31 See CCC 1950-1960.

32 Augustine: *Exposition on Psalm 58*. See CCC 1962.

33 In contrast, St. Paul suggests that in Heaven, we will have *direct* knowledge of God, for "I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). The Church recognizes *infused knowledge*, directly conferred by God, perhaps possessed by Adam and Eve (see John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Infused knowledge").

34 "Essential to knowledge is that some reality from outside the mind is re-presented in the mind by what is called an intentional likeness or similarity to the object known. Knowledge, therefore, is assimilation of mind with object" (John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Knowledge").

that formal or conscious. St. Thomas Aquinas said that to reason is simply "to advance from one thing [that is] understood to another."³⁶ St. John Henry Newman said that reason³⁷ is "the faculty of gaining knowledge without direct perception, or of ascertaining one thing by means of another."³⁸

In ordinary, everyday reasoning, we pass from one point to another in various ways: by a mere indication, by what seems probable, or by an association in our minds; then perhaps we fall back on experience, or the testimony of someone we trust, or a popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory.³⁹

How we reason is a mystery. Think about the last time you "jumped to the conclusion" that someone was dishonest, or pleased, or unhappy. Think of the many subtle symptoms — in his manner, voice, accent, words, appearance, or silence — which your mind felt and analyzed almost unconsciously. Think of how much you deduced, and how quickly. Then think of how difficult it would be to *justify* your conclusion.⁴⁰

We all reason like this, all the time. Whether we are geniuses or mentally handicapped, whether we can analyze what we are doing or not,⁴¹ we all have this "living spontaneous energy within us."⁴²

Truth from reasoning

To sum up, then: my idea of anything outside myself is *inferred* or *deduced* by reasoning from the sensations and emotions it causes in me.

Now my idea of anything outside myself is *true* insofar as it corresponds to the thing itself. Insofar as it is merely *caused*, rather than being inferred by reasoning, we do not call it "true."

This sounds complicated, but it is a principle we all use all the time. For example, in a story by Agatha Christie, Mrs. McGillicuddy wakes from a nap on a long train journey, sees a woman being strangled in a train that is passing on a parallel track, and summons the conductor. The man looks at her doubtfully. Then he catches a glimpse of a picture in her magazine showing a girl being strangled, and he says, "Now don't you think, Madam, that you'd been reading an exciting story, and that you just dropped off, and awaking a little confused — ?"⁴³

Why does the conductor think that Mrs. McGillicuddy's story is not true? Because he thinks that it is fully accounted for — *caused*, in fact — by her reading material and her nap.

For another example, take the suggestion that the idea of God can be fully accounted for — that it is actually *caused* — by a gene that some of us inherit while others do not.⁴⁴ If that were the case, then we would rightly discount the

35 "Reasoning" suggests drawing *conclusions* or *inferences* from *premises* by *logic* or *logical argument*; *inferring* or *deducing* conclusions from *evidence*; *arguing* that *since* this is true, *therefore* that is true; *proving* that this *implies* that. For example, lawyers *gather* evidence to *prove* that a man is guilty or innocent of a crime; mathematicians make statements like "If $a = b$ and $b = c$, then $a = c$," or "If $a = b$, then $a + c = b + c$."

36 Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, Part 1, Question 79, Article 8

37 "According to the simplest view of it."

38 To reason is "nothing more than to gain truth from former truth, without the intervention of sense. One fact may suffice for a whole theory, one principle may create and sustain a system, one minute token is a clue to a large discovery. The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation" (Newman: *Implicit and Explicit Reason*).

39 See the "Introduction" to this course; watch the reasoning in the movie *Twelve Angry Men*. "The progress of reason is not unlike that of a climber on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends in a way he does not know himself: by personal endowments and practice rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him" (Newman: *Implicit and Explicit Reason*). Students of Mathematics often say that they know the answer, but cannot tell how they got it.

40 Accordingly, we distinguish between *legal* and *moral* proof. We allow for this difference when we say that a person is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, even when the evidence of his guilt is neither broad nor definite enough to convince everyone.

41 "All men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason" (Newman: *Implicit and Explicit Reason*).

42 Newman: *Implicit and Explicit Reason*

43 Agatha Christie: *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw*, Chapter 1

44 This was widely taken, somewhat mistakenly, to be what Dean Hamer was claiming in *The God Gene: How Faith*

idea of God as having no truth in it.^{4 5}

As an analogy, imagine hearing a ringing in your ears. If it can be fully accounted for by the loud dance music the night before, we say that you are not "really" hearing; that is, you are not hearing the outside world. "Real" hearing is what is left when you have discounted the effect of the loud dance music on the auditory nerves.

Similarly, "real" thinking about the outside world is what is left when you have discounted the effect of the nap, or the reading material, or the gene.^{4 6}

However, according to an atheist, you *cannot* discount this effect, for (he thinks) the nap, the reading material, or the gene actually *causes* my mental idea of anything outside myself. Remember that an atheist regards my ideas as simply things or events in the universe, related to all other things and events in the universe by what we call cause and effect.

On these grounds, an atheist can say, "You think God exists *because* you were brought up that way" or "You think adultery is wrong *because* you are a woman."^{4 7}

Of course, he can equally well say, "You think Shakespeare is a genius *because* you are English" or "You think that two plus two equals four *because* you are a mathematician."^{4 8}

If thought can be fully accounted for — if it is actually *caused* — in this way, then all thought can be considered to be "tainted at the source."^{4 9} All our reasoning is discredited: there is *no* "real" thinking.

Self-destruction

But — and here is where an atheist's thought destroys itself — *it is his own reasoning that has produced his naturalistic, materialistic view of the universe.* In claiming that his view of the universe is true, he implies that his own reasoning has led him to the truth about the universe. But the "truth" he has reached discredits the reasoning that produced it.

If my reasoning is simply the way in which my conditioning *makes* me feel, then I cannot trust my mind when it tells me about the universe any more than a man can trust his ears the morning after the loud dance music.

An atheist says, "I will prove that what you call a proof is only the result of mental habits that result from heredity, which results from bio-chemistry." But "if my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. They may be sound chemically, but that does not make them sound logically. And hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms."^{5 0}

If thought is just electric currents or chemical changes in the brain, we cannot call any thought "true" or "false," for there is no sense in which these words can be used about electric currents or chemical changes.^{5 1}

Atheism says, in effect, "I will prove that proofs are non-rational," or, more succinctly, "I will prove that there are no proofs."^{5 2}

Atheism *cannot* be true, for it saws off the branch it sits on, discredits the

Is Hardwired into Our Genes.

45 All creation can tell us about God, but only through reasoning, not by cause-and-effect.

46 The result of "real" thinking is related to the outside world as a conclusion is related to a premise or an inference to an observation, not as an effect is related to a cause. See C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, III, and *God in the Dock*, "Bulverism."

47 "A society in which conjugal infidelity is tolerated must always be in the long run a society adverse to women" (C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "We Have No 'Right to Happiness'").

48 For other examples, see C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Bulverism"; and *The Pilgrim's Regress*: Book Three, Chapter 9.

49 C.S. Lewis: *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Book Three, Chapter VIII

50 J.B.S. Haldane: *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, "When I am Dead." Haldane was a self-proclaimed atheist.

51 An atheist's account of what goes on in our minds "leaves no room for the acts of knowing or insight on which the whole value of our thinking, as a means to truth, depends" (C.S. Lewis: *Miracles*, III).

52 See C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "The Funeral of a Great Myth."

process by which it is arrived at.⁵³

We must, on pain of idiocy, admit that in reasoning — the process by which we determine truth and falsehood — there is something from outside the universe.

The Catholic explanation

For a Catholic, reason — which is an attribute of God — is older than the universe. God made the universe. When He made humans, He made us "in His image," giving us something of His own power to reason. When we reason, He frees us from non-rational cause-and-effect as far as is necessary for us to know truth.

When we say that we know something about an object we are contemplating, we claim that we are perceiving the truth about it. If we are, then our thought must have broken free from the universal chain of cause-and-effect; the result (the idea in our mind) must be related to what we are contemplating (the outside thing) *by reason*, at least to some extent; it cannot be merely a particular effect of that total, and largely mindless, system of things and events that we call the universe.

Conclusion

Our sense of right and wrong and our ability to discover truth by reasoning are compelling evidence that the universe is not all there is: there is Something or Someone outside.

Can we perform a scientific experiment to see whether humans can really tell right from wrong and truth from falsehood?

No, for science depends on observation.

To understand this, observe worms. You will soon see that they move away from the light. But is it because they consider this the right thing to do? Is it because the light *forces* them to move away — does the light account for their behaviour completely? You cannot tell; you can observe only what worms actually do.

Similarly, no observation of humans can discover whether we really have the abilities we claim.

Fortunately, there is one thing — only one — in the whole universe about which I know more than science can discover, and that is *myself*. I do not merely observe myself, from the outside, as I observe everything else; I *am* myself; I know myself directly, from the inside; I have "inside information"; I am "in the know."⁵⁴ And every human being can say the same.

I *know* that I have two abilities which no one studying me from the outside could ever see, two abilities which free me from — raise me above — the observable, cause-and-effect universe: 1) my ability to know the truth — that which *is*⁵⁵ — and 2) my ability to know the good — that which *ought to be*.⁵⁶ Both, as we have seen, imply that the universe cannot be all there is.

My position, then, is this: there is only one case in which I can even *expect* to know whether there is anything outside or behind or above the universe, namely the case of myself. And in that one case I find that there is.

Alternatively: if there is a controlling power outside the universe, I cannot expect it to show itself to me as one of the observable facts inside the universe, any more than I could expect the architect of a house to be a wall or a staircase in the house.⁵⁷ The only way in which I can expect it to show itself is by direct communication, inside myself: as a light showing me the truth, for example, or as an influence or command trying to get me to behave in a certain way.

And that is just what I do find.

53 "The fact that some people of scientific education cannot by any effort be taught to see the difficulty, confirms one's suspicion that here we touch a radical disease in their whole style of thought" (C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "The Funeral of a Great Myth").

54 See Appendix 2.

55 By reason.

56 By practical reason.

57 God did become part of His own creation in the Incarnation, but it is not something we could have expected.

Is there anything outside the universe? In the only case where I can expect to get an answer, the answer turns out to be Yes.

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Appendix 1: The Law of Right and Wrong

From C.S. Lewis: *The Abolition of Man*

1. THE LAW OF GENERAL BENEFICENCE

(a) Negative

"I have not slain men." (Ancient Egyptian. From the Confession of the Righteous Soul, "Book of the Dead." v. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* [= *ERE*], vol. V, p. 478)

"Do not murder." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:13)

"Terrify not men or God will terrify thee." (Ancient Egyptian. Precepts of Ptahhetep. H.R. Hall, *Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 133 n)

"In Nastrond (= Hell) I saw...murderers." (Old Norse. *Volospà* 38, 39)

"I have not brought misery upon my fellows. I have not made the beginning of every day laborious in the sight of him who worked for me." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478)

"I have not been grasping." (Ancient Egyptian. *Ibid.*)

"Who meditates oppression, his dwelling is overturned." (Babylonian. *Hymn to Samas. ERE* v. 445)

"He who is cruel and calumnious has the character of a cat." (Hindu. Laws of Manu. Janet, *Histoire de la Science Politique*, vol. i, p. 6)

"Slander not." (Babylonian. *Hymn to Samas. ERE* v. 445)

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:16)

"Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded." (Hindu. Janet, p. 7)

"Has he...driven an honest man from his family? broken up a well cemented clan?" (Babylonian. List of Sins from incantation tablets. *ERE* v. 446)

"I have not caused hunger. I have not caused weeping." (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 4,78)

"Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects of Confucius*, trans. A. Waley, xv. 23; cf. xii. 2)

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19:17)

"He whose heart is in the smallest degree set upon goodness will dislike no one." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, iv. 4)

(b) Positive

"Nature urges that a man should wish human society to exist and should wish to enter it." (Roman. Cicero, *De Officiis*, I. iv)

"By the fundamental Law of Nature Man [is] to be preserved as much as possible." (Locke, *Treatises of Civil Govt.* ii. 3)

"When the people have multiplied, what next should be done for them? The Master said, Enrich them. Jan Ch'iu said, When one has enriched them, what next should be done for them? The Master said, Instruct them." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, xiii. g)

"Speak kindness...show good will." (Babylonian. *Hymn to Samas. ERE* v. 445)

"Men were brought into existence for the sake of men that they might do one another good." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii)

"Man is man's delight." (Old Norse. *Havamal* 47)

"He who is asked for alms should always give." (Hindu. Janet, i. 7)

"What good man regards any misfortune as no concern of his?" (Roman. Juvenal xv. 140)

"I am a man: nothing human is alien to me." (Roman. Terence, *Heaut. Tim.*)

"Love thy neighbour as thyself." (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19: 18)

"Love the stranger as thyself." (Ancient Jewish. *Ibid.* 33, 34)

"Do to men what you wish men to do to you." (Christian. Matt. 7:12)

2. THE LAW OF SPECIAL BENEFICENCE

"It is upon the trunk that a gentleman works. When that is firmly set up, the Way grows. And surely proper behaviour to parents and elder brothers is the trunk of goodness." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, i. 2)

"Brothers shall fight and be each others' bane." (Old Norse. Account of the Evil Age before the World's end, *Volospa* 45)

"Has he insulted his elder sister?" (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446)

"You will see them take care of their kindred [and] the children of their friends ... never reproaching them in the least." (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted *ERE* v. 437)

"Love thy wife studiously. Gladden her heart all thy life long." (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 481)

"Nothing can ever change the claims of kinship for a right-thinking man." (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2600)

"Did not Socrates love his own children, though he did so as a free man and as one not forgetting that the gods have the first claim on our friendship?" (Greek. Epictetus, iii. 24)

"Natural affection is a thing right and according to Nature." (Greek. *Ibid.* I. xi)

"I ought not to be unfeeling like a statue but should fulfil both my natural and artificial relations, as a worshipper, a son, a brother, a father, and a citizen." (Greek. *Ibid.* III. ii)

"This first I rede thee: be blameless to thy kindred. Take no vengeance even though they do thee wrong." (Old Norse. *Sigrdrifumal*, 22)

"Is it only the sons of Atreus who love their wives? For every good man, who is right-minded, loves and cherishes his own." (Greek. Homer, *Iliad*, ix. 34.0)

"The union and fellowship of men will be best preserved if each receives from us the more kindness in proportion as he is more closely connected with us." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xvi)

"Part of us is claimed by our country, part by our parents, part by our friends." (Roman. *Ibid.* I. vii)

"If a ruler...compassed the salvation of the whole state, surely you would call him Good? The Master said, It would no longer be a matter of "Good." He would without doubt be a Divine Sage." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, vi. 28)

"Has it escaped you that, in the eyes of gods and good men, your native land deserves from you more honour, worship, and reverence than your mother and father and all your ancestors? That you should give a softer answer to its anger than to a father's anger? That if you cannot persuade it to alter its mind you must obey it in all quietness, whether it binds you or beats you or sends you to a war where you may get wounds or death?" (Greek. Plato, *Crito*, 51 A, B)

"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith." (Christian. I Tim. 5:8)

"Put them in mind to obey magistrates..." "I exhort that prayers be made for kings and all that are in authority." (Christian. Tit. 3:1 and I Tim 2:1, 2)

3. DUTIES TO PARENTS, ELDERS, ANCESTORS

"Your father is an image of the Lord of Creation, your mother an image of the Earth. For him who fails to honour them, every work of piety is in vain. This is the first duty." (Hindu. Janet, i. 9)

"Has he despised Father and Mother?" (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 44.6)

"I was a staff by my Father's side...I went in and out at his command." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 481)

"Honour thy Father and thy Mother." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:12)

"To care for parents." (Greek. List of duties in Epictetus, III. vii)

"Children, old men, the poor, and the sick, should be considered as the lords of the atmosphere." (Hindu. Janet, i. 8)

"Rise up before the hoary head and honour the old man." (Ancient Jewish. Lev. 19:32)

"I tended the old man, I gave him my staff." (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 481)

"You will see them take care...of old men." (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted *ERE* v. 437)

"I have not taken away the oblations of the blessed dead." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478)

"When proper respect towards the dead is shown at the end and continued after they are far away, the moral force (*tê*) of a people has reached its highest point." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, i. 9)

4. DUTIES TO CHILDREN AND POSTERITY

"Children, the old, the poor, etc. should be considered as lords of the atmosphere." (Hindu. Janet, i. 8)

"To marry and to beget children." (Greek. List of duties. Epictetus, I I I. vii)

"Can you conceive an Epicurean commonwealth?...What will happen? Whence is the population to be kept up? Who will educate them? Who will be Director of Adolescents? Who will be Director of Physical Training? What will be taught?" (Greek. *Ibid.*)

"Nature produces a special love of offspring" and "To live according to Nature is the supreme good." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. iv, and *De Legibus*, I. xxi)

"The second of these achievements is no less glorious than the first; for while the first did good on one occasion, the second will continue to benefit the state for ever." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xxii)

"Great reverence is owed to a child." (Roman. Juvenal, xiv. 4.7)

"The Master said, Respect the young." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, ix. 22)

"The killing of the women and more especially of the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the people, is the saddest part...and we feel it very sorely." (Redskin. Account of the Battle of Wounded Knee. *ERE* v. 432)

5. THE LAW OF JUSTICE

(a) *Sexual justice*

"Has he approached his neighbour's wife?" (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446)

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:14)

"I saw in Nastrond (= Hell)...beguilers of others' wives." (Old Norse. *Volospa* 38, 39)

(b) *Honesty*

"Has he drawn false boundaries?" (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446)

"To wrong, to rob, to cause to be robbed." (Babylonian. *Ibid.*)

"I have not stolen." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478)

"Thou shalt not steal." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:15)

"Choose loss rather than shameful gains." (Greek. Chilon Fr. 10. Diels)

"Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights." (Roman. Justinian, *Institutions*, I. i)

"If the native made a 'find' of any kind (e.g. a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him, as far as his own tribesmen were concerned, no matter how long he left it." (Australian Aborigines. *ERE* v. 441)

"The first point of justice is that none should do any mischief to another unless he has first been attacked by the other's wrongdoing. The second is that a man should treat common property as common property, and private property as his own. There is no such thing as private property by nature, but things have become private either through prior occupation (as when men of old came into empty territory) or by conquest, or law, or agreement, or stipulation, or casting lots." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii)

(c) *Justice in Court, etc.*

"Whoso takes no bribe...well pleasing is this to Samas." (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 445)

"I have not traduced the slave to him who is set over him." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478)

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:16)

"Regard him whom thou knowest like him whom thou knowest not." (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 482)

"Do no unrighteousness in judgement. You must not consider the fact that one party is poor nor the fact that the other is a great man." (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19:15)

6. THE LAW OF GOOD FAITH AND VERACITY

"A sacrifice is obliterated by a lie and the merit of alms by an act of fraud." (Hindu. Janet, i. 6)

"Whose mouth, full of lying, avails not before thee: thou burnest their utterance." (Babylonian. Hymn to Samas. *ERE* v. 445)

"With his mouth was he full of *Yea*, in his heart full of *Nay*?" (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 446)

"I have not spoken falsehood." (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478)

"I sought no trickery, nor swore false oaths." (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2738)

"The Master said, Be of unwavering good faith." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, viii. 13)

"In Nastrond (= Hell) I saw the perjurers." (Old Norse. *Volospa* 39)

"Hateful to me as are the gates of Hades is that man who says one thing, and hides another in his heart." (Greek. Homer. *Iliad*, ix. 312)

"The foundation of justice is good faith." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii)

"[The gentleman] must learn to be faithful to his superiors and to keep promises." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, I. 8)

"Anything is better than treachery." (Old Norse. *Havamal* 124)

7. THE LAW OF MERCY

"The poor and the sick should be regarded as lords of the atmosphere." (Hindu. Janet, i. 8)

"Whoso makes intercession for the weak, well pleasing is this to Samas." (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 445)

"Has he failed to set a prisoner free?" (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446)

"I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a ferry boat to the boatless." (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 478)

"One should never strike a woman; not even with a flower." (Hindu. Janet, i. 8)

"There, Thor, you got disgrace, when you beat women." (Old Norse. *Harbarthsljoth* 38)

"In the Dalebura tribe a woman, a cripple from birth, was carried about by the tribes-people in turn until her death at the age of sixty-six..." "They never desert the sick." (Australian Aborigines. *ERE* v. 443)

"You will see them take care of...widows, orphans, and old men, never reproaching them." (Redskin. *ERE* v. 4.39)

"Nature confesses that she has given to the human race the tenderest hearts, by giving us the power to weep. This is the best part of us." (Roman. Juvenal, xv. 131)

"They said that he had been the mildest and gentlest of the kings of the world." (Anglo-Saxon. Praise of the hero in *Beowulf*, 3180)

"When thou cuttest down thine harvest...and hast forgot a sheaf...thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." (Ancient Jewish. Deut. 24:19)

8. THE LAW OF MAGNANIMITY

(a)

"There are two kinds of injustice : the first is found in those who do an injury, the second in those who fail to protect another from injury when they can." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii) "

"Men always knew that when force and injury was offered they might be defenders of themselves; they knew that howsoever men may seek their own commodity, yet if this were done with injury unto others it was not to be suffered, but by all men and by all good means to be withstood." (English. Hooker, *Laws of Eccl. Polity*, I. ix. 4)

"To take no notice of a violent attack is to strengthen the heart of the enemy. Vigour is valiant, but cowardice is vile." (Ancient Egyptian. The Pharaoh Senusert III. cit. H.R. Hall, *Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 161)

"They came to the fields of joy, the fresh turf of the Fortunate Woods and the dwellings of the Blessed...here was the company of those who had suffered wounds fighting for their fatherland." (Roman. Virgil, *Aeneid.* vi. 638-9, 660)

"Courage has got to be harder, heart the stouter, spirit the sterner, as our strength weakens. Here lies our lord, cut to pieces, our best man in the dust. If anyone thinks of leaving this battle, he can howl forever." (Anglo-Saxon. *Maldon*, 312)

"Praise and imitate that man to whom, while life is pleasing, death is not grievous." (Stoic. Seneca, *Ep.* liv)

"The Master said, Love learning and if attacked be ready to die for the Good Way." (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, viii. 13)

(b)

"Death is to be chosen before slavery and base deeds." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xxiii)

"Death is better for every man than life with shame." (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2890)

"Nature and Reason command that nothing uncomely, nothing effeminate, nothing lascivious be done or thought." (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. iv)

"We must not listen to those who advise us 'being men to think human thoughts, and being mortal to think mortal thoughts,' but must put on immortality as much as is possible and strain every nerve to live according to that best part of us, which, being small in bulk, yet much more in its power and honour surpasses all else." (Ancient Greek. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1177 B)

"The soul then ought to conduct the body, and the spirit of our minds the soul. This is therefore the first Law, whereby the highest power of the mind requireth obedience at the hands of all the rest." (Hooker, op. cit. I. viii. 6)

"Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live, let him wait for his time...let him patiently bear hard words, entirely abstaining from bodily pleasures." (Ancient Indian. Laws of Manu. *ERE* ii. 98)

"He who is unmoved, who has restrained his senses...is said to be devoted. As a flame in a windless place that flickers not, so is the devoted." (Ancient Indian. *Bhagavad gita.* *ERE* ii. go)

(c)

"Is not the love of Wisdom a practice of death?" (Ancient Greek. Plato, *Phaedo*, 81 A)

"I know that I hung on the gallows for nine nights, wounded with the spear as a sacrifice to Odin, Myself offered to Myself." (Old Norse. *Havamal*, 1 10 in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*; stanza 139 in Hildebrand's *Lieder der Alteren Edda.* 1922)

"Verily, verily I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it." (Christian. John 12:24, 25)

Appendix 2

Inside vs. Outside Information

From C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Meditation in a Tool Shed"

"I was standing today in a dark tool shed," C.S. Lewis says. "The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch black. I stared at it."

"Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. Looking along the beam, I could see no tool shed and no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun."

Clearly, Lewis says, looking *at* the beam and looking *along* the beam are very different experiences.

But this is only a very simple example of the difference between looking *at* and looking *along*. A young man meets a girl. The whole world looks different when he sees her. Her voice reminds him of something he has been trying to remember all his life, and ten minutes' casual chat with her is more precious than all the favours that all other women in the world could grant. He is *in* love. Now comes a scientist and describes this young man's experience from the *outside*. For him it is all an affair of the young man's genes and a recognized biological stimulus. That is the difference between looking *along* something and looking *at* it.

When you have got into the habit of making this distinction you will find examples of it all day long.

- The mathematician sits thinking, and to him it seems that he is contemplating timeless and spaceless truths about numbers. The cerebral physiologist sees tiny movements in the grey matter of the mathematician's brain.
- The savage dances in ecstasy at midnight before Nyonga and feels with every muscle that his dance is helping to bring the new green crops and the spring rain and the babies. The anthropologist, observing that savage, records that he is performing a fertility ritual of the type so-and-so.
- The Christian prays and believes that he is getting in touch with God. The anthropologist sees a man comforting himself with a time-honoured religious ritual.
- The girl cries over her broken doll and feels that she has lost a real friend. The psychologist says that her nascent maternal instinct, which has been lavished on a bit of shaped and coloured plastic, has been frustrated.

You get one experience of a thing when you look *along* it, from *inside*, and another when you look *at* it, from *outside*. And no amount of observation from the *outside* will tell you what the *inside* experience is like, or even that there is an *inside* experience.¹

Which is right?

Now comes a question. Which is the *true* or *valid* experience? Which tells you most about the thing: what you learn from *inside* it or what you learn from *outside*?

You can hardly ask that question without noticing that for the last 150 years or so² everyone has taken the answer for granted: *outside*, every time.

¹ For example, "one who contended that a poem was nothing but black marks on white paper would be unanswerable if he addressed an audience who couldn't read. Look at it through microscopes, analyse the printer's ink and the paper, study it (in that way) as long as you like; you will never find something over and above all the products of analysis whereof you can say 'This is the poem.' Those who can read, however, will continue to say the poem exists." (C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI. For a fuller analysis of this observation, see C.S. Lewis: *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, II "Transposition."

It has been generally assumed that if you want the true account of religion you must go not to religious people, but to anthropologists; that if you want the true account of sexual love you must go not to lovers, but to psychologists; that if you want to understand an "ideology" such as medieval chivalry, you must read books written not by medieval knights, but by modern sociologists.

The people who look *at* things, *from the outside*, have come to be called the experts; the people who look *along* things, *from the inside*, have been ignored or thought of as dupes. It has even come to be taken for granted that the *external* account of a thing somehow refutes or debunks the *inside* account.

And you can see why. After all, we are often deceived when we look at things from the *inside*. For example, the girl who looks so wonderful when we are in love may really be very plain, stupid, and disagreeable. The savage's dance to Nyonga does not really cause the crops to grow.

Since we see that we can be deceived by looking *along* things, from the *inside*, would we not be wise to confine ourselves, from now on, to looking *at* things, from the outside? Would we not be wise to start discounting all *inside* experiences and start trusting only the *outside* experiences?

Stepping outside

Let us go back to the tool shed. From *inside* the beam, I can see the leaves and the sun. Now let me step *outside* the beam. I see again the bright beam of light and the glittering specks of dust.

I have stepped *outside* the beam; but I am still *inside* my own vision, looking *along* it *at* the beam of light.

So let me step *outside* my own vision and look *at* it. This is what biology students do; they stop paying attention to what they are seeing and instead study what happens in the corneas and lenses and retinas and optic nerves of their eyes when they look at something.

They have stepped *outside* their own vision; but they are *inside* a new activity: they are studying the eye. And, in turn, they could step outside that activity and study what happens in their brains when they study the eye.

So the chain goes on, link by link. There is no end to it. We can step *outside* one experience only by stepping *inside* another. There can be no question of discounting *all* inside experiences, for every *outside* experience is the *inside* of some other experience.

We must, on pain of idiocy, deny from the very outset the idea that looking *at*, from the outside, is intrinsically truer or better than looking *along*, from the inside. We must look both *along* and *at* everything, from the inside and from the outside.

Before we claim, then, that all those moral ideals which look so transcendental and beautiful from inside are *nothing more than* a mass of biological instincts and inherited taboos, we must step inside to see whether they will reveal their real and transcendental nature.

For example, we must not only describe and analyze prayer *from the outside*, as we did in our talk on "Prayer"; we must also *pray*, experiencing it *from the inside*. We must not only know³ *about* Jesus, but also *know Jesus*.⁴

We cannot know in advance whether the lover or the psychologist will give the more correct account of love, or whether both accounts are equally correct in different ways, or whether both are equally wrong. But we must start with no prejudice for or against either kind of looking. We will just have to find out.

² Lewis wrote this essay in 1945.

³ In French, *savoir*.

⁴ In French, *connaître*. See the talk on "Divine Revelation," Appendix 2, and the talk on "Mary and Joseph," Appendix 2, 14.