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Starting Science From God

1: Connecting Science and Theism


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A series of four evenings

Titles:

- **Feb 5: Connecting Science and Theism** (chs 1, 3)
- Feb 12: Discrete Degrees (chs. 4, 5)
- Feb 19: Explaining Theism (Part III)
- Feb 26: Applications to Theistic Science (Part V)



- I talk for 45 mins (answering shorter questions).
 - This is being video-taped. Not too much noise please.
- Refreshment break for 15 mins
- Discussion for 45 mins (for longer questions)

Feb 5, 2013 Ian Thompson 2

1. Connecting Science and Theism

Topics for today:

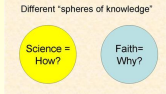
- Theism has empirical consequences
 - It can be tested, and so is scientific.
- Explore theism as an alternative to naturalism
- Principles of Theism
- Science should allow causal effects beyond the physical
- Religion should allow a God of unselfish love.
- Some history, and some contemporary proposals.
- Topics for later talks

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Theism has empirical effects?

Opposing view:

- ‘non-overlapping magisteria’ (NOMA)?
 - Science = ‘what is’ and
 - Religion=‘what should be’
 - Protects religion from science & vice versa




- But NOMA has serious defects:
 - If we are to know God, God must influence us.
 - Religion & theism do talk of what is!
 - How we live. Human nature (soul?).
 - Religious history (revelations, incarnation), etc.
- There are overlaps!

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Modern Naturalism

- Tries to allow only physical explanations
 - Looks for mechanisms
 - Does not rely on anything about God
- But has big difficulties still:
 - Cannot yet explain minds & consciousness
 - Cannot yet explain origin of life & its informational basis.
- So it is a ‘Promissory Materialism’
 - But: how long should we wait? 50 or 500 years?
- This: we should try alternatives now!
 - Should make new theories of mind, etc.
 - To compete with existing science research programs



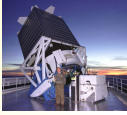
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Requirements of Science

Should accept the best explanation

But: science still needs overall theory

- Theory to explain how to observe
- Theory to explain how causes operate



Science should not prejudge its starting point:


- The conclusion about ‘what exists’ should depend on results of investigations

So: different ‘overall theories’ should be allowed.

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Try to make 'Theistic Science'

- Start from postulate that There Is a God
 - In contrast to naturalism's "no need for God".
- Clarify the basic postulates of theism
 - No paradoxes allowed.
 - Keep a rational consistency!
- Should be non-reductionist:
 - Do not make minds 'nothing but' the brain.
- Make predictions to compare with experiments
 - Supported if predictions are confirmed




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Some Scientific Objections to Theism

If God were allowed as an explanation in science, then 'anything goes'.

- The explanation of 'God did it' could be used for any event whatsoever, however regular or irregular and however comprehensible or incomprehensible.


Reply: God is not some arbitrary and capricious old man who can do what he likes.



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Allowing a Scientific Theism

- The previous reasons for opposing theism in science arise from misunderstandings about the nature of God.
- We already know that there are considerable regularities in the world, so we should instead explain the source, nature and reasons for those regularities.
- That source, for example, might be the constancy and eternity of the love and wisdom of God.



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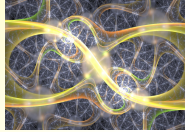

Where to begin Theism?

'God is an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient being who created & sustains the world'.

- But these attributes do not have specific consequences for minds & spirit!
- We want the 'God of the Living', not just 'God of the Philosophers'.

Better 'Living theism':


- God is that Person who is a necessary being, who is unselfish Love itself, Wisdom itself, and (in fact) Life itself.
- God enlivens our world.

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Essential Theistic Principles

1. God is love which is unselfish and cannot love only itself.
2. God is wisdom as well as love and thereby also power and action.
3. God is life itself: the source of all dispositions to will, think and act.
4. Everything in the world is a kind of image of God: all minds and also natural objects of all kinds.
5. Our life from God derives from divine power, depending on us.




This set was suggested first by Emanuel Swedenborg in his book "Divine Love and Wisdom" (1763)

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Religious Support for Postulates

1. Love: "God is Love" 1 John 4:8
2. Wisdom: "the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" Proverbs 2:6
3. Life: "the Father has life in himself" John 5:26
4. Image of God: "God created man in his own image" Genesis 1:27
5. Our life is from God: "The free gift of God is eternal life" Romans 6:23



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Questions to be answered

- How can there be a Personal God, a Living God?
- Is the world a monism, dualism, or many levels?
- If many, what multiple levels or planes of existence are there?
- What are the mind-body connections between fully-existing minds and brains?
- How do physical, biological and mental structures come into existence?
 - Are they created, gradually developed, or evolved?

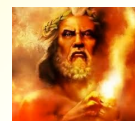
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13

Adjusting Religion

- God is a being composed entirely of Love, and, moreover, a completely unselfish love.
 - Anger, jealousy, exclusiveness and selfishness are completely foreign.
 - But God is often portrayed as angry or jealous!
- Rather: it is *our* variations which lead to God having varying appearances to us.
- Psychology (to be confirmed):
 - when we are angry, God appears angry with us.



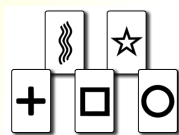
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14

Adjusting Science

- Allow physical processes to depend on our individual minds, or even on the transcendent mind of God.
- Do *not* refuse even to consider evidence, because of a denial in advance of such dependence.
- Do not be frightened by new ideas.



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What does Theistic Science Prove?

- There are 'proofs of God' starting from what we know about nature in general.
- But: I do not argue in a natural theology *from* nature and science *to* God.
- Theistic Science does not try to logically prove the basic features of theism
- Instead, I start *from* God.
- I propose to start science *from* God and theism.
- You will see what *theistic science* looks like.

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16

Preview of Second Talk (Feb 12)

- Need concepts of 'substance' and 'form'
 - Not hidden from science
 - Applicable to all processes: physical, mental, ...
 - Following approach of Aristotle, but not Aquinas
- Need concept of 'multiple levels'
 - Use some examples from physics & psychology
 - Principles of 'Generation and Selection'
 - Usable to *connect* the physical & mental
 - Concept of 'Discrete Degrees' will be useful

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17

'Substance' and 'form' in history

Plato : forms are eternal, but we trapped on earth
 Aristotle: form & substance & change all essential
 Aquinas : matter is inert & minds are forms
 Newton : theory of matter under God of theism
 Leibniz : God & minds don't interfere in nature
 Swedenborg: Discrete degrees & spiritual can be known
 Kant : Spiritual things cannot be observed
 since then, science has ignored spiritual causes.

For now: use Aristotle's principles, but more generally

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18

Some bad proposals

Theism & spirits & minds act (**not!**):

- Abstractly
- Are 'active information' (or any information)
- In a 4th dimension (or 5th)
- At a high 'frequency of vibrations'
- Outside time
- A 'fine' or 'subtle' substance in physical gaps
- Are 'system wholes'
- Are cosmically 'large' as 'expanded consciousness'
- According to quantum physics

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19

Contemporary Bad Proposals

- Chaos theory (Polkinghorne)
 - Sensitivity to starting conditions means that physics can never predict completely accurately.
- Quantum measurement (Chopra)
 - Minds influence brains by non-local correlations
- Quantum vacuum (Chopra, Laszlo)
 - Vacuum 'behind reality' is consciousness
- Panpsychism (Whitehead, and now Wilber)
 - Everything has some psychic component

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20

End

We have discussed:

- How to relate science and theism
- Making a Theistic Science
- Principles of Theism
- The need to understand 'substance'
- Other attempts to link these things.

See you next week at the same time!

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21