

God and the Limit of Science

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Photo date and location unknown

Distinguished chairman, eminent scholars, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you all very much for attending this eighth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences. Each year this meeting has become increasingly important because of your participation. This is gratifying to me as the founder of the conference.

In connection with this year's theme, "The Responsibility of the Academic Community in the Search for Absolute Values," I would like to express a few opinions on the topic, "God and the Limit of Science." As science developed in recent years, humankind had great expectations and believed that the advancement of science and technology would bring relief from both spiritual and physical difficulties.

Scientists who have a sense that theirs is a crucial mission as contributors to humankind, have continued on the one hand to pursue ultimate scientific truth and, on the other hand, to apply technology in almost every field of human endeavor. The resulting benefits have been fantastic economic growth, material affluence and physical well being such as humankind has never before known.

However, for all its great merits, today's technology has equally great demerits, generating such problems as pollution, resource depletion, depersonalization and accumulation of formidable weapons of thermonuclear destruction. Thus, the very science that originated with the intent to realize happiness for humankind has, with its successes, brought fears and instability as well. What is the reason? The reason is that science, in adhering to its position of scientific neutrality, has excluded considerations of purpose and value.

I wish to proclaim that human beings have value from their very origin. They are creations of God. They are created to lead life with a definite value perspective in accordance with the purpose of creation. In spite of originally being creatures of vast value, people have disregarded this value perspective and, believing in the omnipotence of science, taken it as a panacea. Consequently, technology has become a source of increasing damage.

For human beings, science can only be a means; it cannot be an end. The purpose of human life is to realize God's purpose of creation. Each person is a unified being of both physical and spiritual entities. Hence, on the foundation of physical life, we are to lead a life of value -- a life of love, truth, goodness and beauty. Science and technology are needed for the sake of allowing physical life to become a proper basis for spiritual life.

Therefore, the science that disregards or fails to emphasize the life of value actually brings about the destruction of value perspective in human beings, leading toward today's reality of fear and insecurity. The deliverance of humankind from this unfortunate reality can be achieved only by searching for and discovering the true value perspective. Science, in turn, must abide by this value perspective, which must be based on absolute value.

Where could this absolute value be found? It could only be found in God's love. In fact, the union of truth, goodness and beauty based on God's love is indeed this absolute value.

Accordingly, it stands to reason that humankind's liberation from the harms caused by the misuse of science and technology can come only when science itself recognizes God, and guides and applies its technology in the same direction as God's love.

Next, I would like to suggest that there is a limit to science in its search for truth in the field of nature. In this twentieth century, science has finally found itself pushed into the realm of philosophy in its own search for truth. It has had to take upon itself the question of the origin of the universe, just as did ancient philosophies, both Eastern and Western.

That is, science itself, especially physics and biology, has been confronted with various long-disputed and unresolved questions of ontology. Indeed, certain experiments in quantum physics and molecular biology have been performed for the purpose of exploring these ontological questions.

Thus, using theoretical and experimental approaches, physics has dealt with the study of ontology, with the question, "What is the true nature of matter?" The first answer was "the atom." A second was "elementary particles." Finally, quantum mechanics delivered an answer in which the elementary particles of matter are related to energy itself. In the same way, biology approached a similar ontological problem, "What is the true nature of life?" Eventually, the answer suggested was, "The secret of life lies in the properties of DNA!"

Thus, in its search for the truth about the universe, natural science has uncovered many facts and accumulated an astonishing body of knowledge. However, these are hardly ultimate solutions to man's questions.

Even though quantum physics affirms that the true ground of matter is energy, we do not know from where energy comes, what the previous stage or state of energy is, or why and how energy transfers from its previous state to the existing state. Why did a variety of molecules come into being? Why does each molecule have its characteristic pattern of positive and negative charges? There are many questions yet to be clarified.

Similarly, molecular biology maintains that the true nature of life is bound up in DNA coding, yet significant questions remain. How did the four units of the DNA code come to bear information? How did DNA come to possess the ability to replicate itself?

In its pursuit of truth, even though science has developed to a surprising degree, it still leaves many of its own problems untouched. What is the implication of this? It can only mean that these remaining scientific questions are not within the direct realm of current natural science.

Up to now, although science in its quest for truth has investigated immediate causes of particular phenomena, it has not taken up the search for motives or reasons for existence as a whole. Thus, the final challenge that science confronts is this question of the ultimate reason for existence. The unexplored problem in the question, "What is the true nature of matter?" is that of the reason for its existence, and again, the untouched problem in the question, "What is the true nature of life?" is that of the very reason for life itself.

I propose that, in clarifying reasons, one must first admit purpose. Before admitting purpose, one must first recognize the Will that made the purpose, namely, the cosmic and universal Will that transcends all things. When you call this cosmic Will "God," then the initial step in clarifying unresolved questions is first to apprehend God's purpose of creation. The second step is to perceive that, along with the physical or chemical factors in all material and life phenomena, there exists a causal motive directing each thing toward a certain purpose.

In short, the very science developed for the happiness of humankind is today a cause of difficulty or even harm. The only way to be freed from these harms is to bring science under the true value perspective that centers in God's love. As more and more scientists find themselves reaching the limit of science, they will find that the key to transcending this limit is to regard that, behind all material and life phenomena, there is a purposeful motive working in accordance with God's purpose of creation.

It is my considered and confident belief that the points mentioned here are the most important and pressing matters facing today's science. It would be most fortunate if they could serve as a reference for the topics to be discussed by all the distinguished scholars who are taking up the theme of this year's conference.

In conclusion, I wish all of you success in your research and pursuit of truth in relation to the absolute truth. I am sure that the fruits of your efforts expressed in the presentations at this conference will contribute in a significant way toward world peace.

Thank you all very much.