

Limitations of Science and Scientists

Science is the pride of the modern era—often perceived as a veritable savior of humanity, but is it worthy of all the trust it is given? Here are two fundamental limitations of science:

1. Science cannot explain whether there is “something behind” nature (as C. S. Lewis puts it).
2. At the hands of biased, fallible scientists, scientific research becomes anything but impartial, objective, and transparent.

Consider what science is: a systematic study of the natural world that generates predictive and innovative power from a single source: observed constants and precedents within nature. If these constants and precedents were suspended and our universe were wholly arbitrary and random, science would cease to exist. To understand the weight of this limitation, one needs to consider that the observed constants themselves beg for an explanation that the scientific method of course cannot deliver. The scientific method works *with* these constants; it has no meaning or function apart from them, so if there is one thing that scientific investigation clearly cannot reveal, it is the forces *behind* these constants.

Whether personal or impersonal forces are responsible, scientists are not capable of transcending their natural jurisdiction to afford us a glimpse. As a Christian, I attest to the authority of the Bible on this point, but let’s dissect the possibilities logically: If personal forces are responsible, scientists are not capable of tracing the material evidence of our universe to a *non*-material source—such as a divine being. And if impersonal forces are responsible, it would be equally impossible for scientists to demonstrate the self-existence and eternity of such forces (and thus rule out personal forces). Thus, scientists are not and will never be capable of placing us in touch with this most fundamental truth about our world.

Importantly, the simple act of living requires that each individual make this call. Before forming any moral, political, or social values, a person must first decide *why* he is here and, in light of that explanation, *how* he should live. This means that all scientists are *guaranteed* to be working from an unspoken, non-

scientific premise with each and every hypothesis they may venture. They will be viewing all evidence through the lens of either theism or a-theism (in the Latin sense), which brings us to the second point above.

At the hands of biased, fallible scientists, scientific research becomes anything but impartial, objective, and transparent. The scientific method can be a valuable method for obtaining knowledge of the world around us, but I would ask the reader to consider the influence of even just the one belief that every scientist will approach the evidence with: theism or a-theism— “God did it” *or* “Impersonal Forces plus Lots of Time did it.” Consider the impact of this most basic belief when viewing the evidence of our world. Theistic scientists will see intention and design; atheists will see something that simply works due to nature filtering out non-working components. Theists will see creative genius, wisdom, and corruption; atheists will draw out no deeper meaning but will only seek to analyze, systematize, and experiment.

There is certainly a degree of overlap in each belief system, things that both sides would agree are accurate or valuable, but consider how the basic belief at the heart of each will pull most of the elements of one’s belief system in different directions. In the realms of medicine, biology, paleontology, and psychology, for example, the theist often stands in marked opposition to the atheist. I ask the reader to consider why this is, particularly in light of the fact that a simple belief in a transcendent God would not in itself alter and disrupt a person’s cognitive abilities to the degree that he must then find himself at odds with “established” science and plain reason at so many turns.

Perhaps it may be, as I believe it is, that one side—the atheistic side—is simply drawing more converts at present and its growing popularity is viewed as an indicator of progress when—in fact—the reasons have little to do with science and more to do with the two illusions addressed in this article: the illusion that scientists either have, or soon will, solve life’s greatest mysteries and the illusion that the scientific method provides a neutral plane for research and investigation.