

REVIEWS

THE MIRACLE OF DIALOGUE

By Reuel L. Howe

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Archimedes' yearning for a lever long enough and a prop strong enough to enable him singlehandedly to move the world seems to be replicated by those who anxiously search for the one word that would be powerful enough to transport or transform all men. The perennial parade of respondents is usually led by those who rush forward, pushing to the borders of the ineffable, piously proffering the word *God*. A close scrutiny of the concomitant verbal qualifiers, however, reveals the anthropomorphic contraband which is so frequently freighted, through the vehicle of language, into the realm of the supernatural, there to be molded into gods that bear the unmistakable image of man. History's graveyards are crowded with man-made gods. In the myriad contemporary voices calling themselves religious can be heard the clang of human cargo ascending to the nimbus regions where new gods are ever in the making.

Overtly more serene but followed by a vast motley crowd are those who would marshal behind the word *love* — a word shaded into many meanings and jaded by a contemporary moral abandonment — a panacean force that suddenly dissipates at the sight of pigment in another man's skin or the probe of another man's mind and finds its advocates crouching in their sheltered pews praying with a timorous arrogance, "Bless us four and no more."

Hard on the heels of either of the above, or just as often commingling with them, are those who feel that *money* is the ultimate term. Money is a particularized form of "everything" and is intrinsically universalistic, since everything can have its monetary equivalent, its counterpart, in "price."

In worship, men will put God's name on their money and call it an act of piety. In its nature as a medium of exchange, money is essentially communicative; hence it is a technical counterpart of love. As a generalized abstraction, money introduces the principle of redemption — a payment by substitution or sacrifice. Money becomes a symbol of pseudoservice or even the desirable, more negotiable substitute for service.

To counter these Archimedean terms, Howe offers a requisite human experience, a personal encounter and involvement that he has chosen to label *dialogue*. Dialogue sees in man, every single man, a priceless uniqueness of essence and potentiality that it seeks to preserve and enhance. It meets every other person as an equal and every person loved becomes more himself. Dialogue (the personal encounter of man with man and man with God) makes men more receptive and responsive, shakes "them free of their conformity and makes them available for transformation" (p. 64).

Herein is the miracle of dialogue. It brings authentic persons into being.

According to Howe, "The purpose of dialogue is to bring the meanings that come

out of men's living in the world to a meeting of meanings that come out of the encounter between God and man in Christ. Men must bring their hopes and purposes, their achievements and failures, their triumphs and their sins, what they are and what they are not, and offer them as a part of their worship to the One who gave all that he had in his love for man. The dialogue of worship thus conceived becomes the dialogue of living; and the Church is just as much the Church when, in its members, it stands at the work bench or sits in the office or plows in the field as when it kneels before the altar" (p. 65).

An important contribution to the concept of education is Howe's eight-point description of the dialogical teacher who "respects the qualities and capacities of the learner and his right and responsibility to become what only he can become" (p. 141). He seeks a dynamic church through a congregation in dialogue. "Such a congregation, by participating in dialogical thinking and living, has regained for itself the distinction of being a center of creative thought and action in its community, a center for experimental living in relation to its community task" (p. 131).

Howe prophetically counters church clannishness with the challenge: "The time may not be far distant when the *laos*, the chosen people of God, will have to eliminate from its membership all 'club members,' whether ordained or unordained, in order that it may be free to get on with the task given to it by its Lord. People who think of the Church as their possession are the enemies of the Church and its mission in the world. The relation is not one of proprietorship, but one in which the members regard themselves as expendable, possessed by the Spirit, and, therefore, members of his Body who would do what he would do in this generation" (p. 132).

To be truly human, to accomplish God's purpose in, through, and for humanity, all men must participate wholly in the personal encounter called dialogue. Thus the miracle of individual uniqueness, love's living embodiment, and God's abiding presence is confirmed in each authentic person.

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THE RELEVANCE OF PHYSICS

By Stanley L. Jaki

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The name of this book suggested to me that the subject matter of *The Relevance of Physics* would be similar to that of *Issues in Science and Religion*, by Ian Barbour (reviewed by Fraser in the autumn 1969 issue of SPECTRUM). After I read the historical section at the beginning, I skipped next to chapter ten, and my first judgment of this author had to be revised. I found that Jaki presents, not another reasoned and cautious development on how science, with its limitations, can participate in the formulation of a theology of nature, but rather the idea that science and theology play separate and distinct roles in the quest for understanding and that they fulfill different

needs. The attempts to combine the two in "natural theology" are described with considerable spice. For example:

For Derham and many others, the vigorously growing body of emerging science appeared indeed a goldmine of proofs pointing to the existence, goodness, and power of a Creator. Unfortunately, it took a long time to realize that many of the shiny bits were only fool's gold. In the meantime theologians and scientists were busy sealing that "holy alliance" between science and religion that extended at least in England well into the nineteenth century. The Continent followed suit, for a while at least, and saw the appearance of books that boasted of such titles as "theology of stones" and "theology of insects," to give only a little detail of a literature which bore witness not so much to God as to a pathetic absence of sobriety of mind.

Theologians, however, are to be blamed only in part. Scientists were no less enthusiastic in preparing fantastic mixtures of physics and sacred history. Halley, in a paper read before the Royal Society in 1694, explained the deluge by huge tidal waves that followed a near collision between a comet and the earth. Newton himself was not safe from indulging in and condoning similar extravaganzas [pp. 430, 431].

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In chapter eight it appears that Jaki might be attempting to show that the relevance of physics is to be found in metaphysics. But chapter twelve does not support that viewpoint. Neither does the objective of this chapter seem to be selling good, stiff, up-to-date liberal-arts physics courses. However, publishing articles (in general and professional journals); viewing the human, trial-and-error nature of physics; and studying the history of physics are considered as means that might help bring about the humility that our society so much needs.

The book has an abundance of information on what physicists have thought about the ultimately small or large, the attainment of ultimate precision, biophysical problems, metaphysics, ethics, or theology (chapters four through ten, respectively). Until my memory improves, I will always refer to Jaki's name index before expounding on some scientist's view on the prospect of life on other worlds or of ethics in science.

Jaki treats a staggering total of material. His method (chapters four to ten) is that of one who would split a crystal on one plane, then put the halves together, and then split it on another plane, and then again. Each chapter recycles through the course of history. Because of this consecutive splitting on issues of metaphysics, ethics, and so on, some scientists figure in more than one chapter, and some issues appear more than once (for example, expansion of the universe, indeterminacy). Careful sorting has reduced this confusing aspect to almost zero, however. If Jaki could have done three men's work instead of two, he might have added other chapters between the first three, and the last two. Physics as a pure and/or applied science, physics and aesthetics, physics and government, for example, all seem to be relevant topics omitted.

Scientism occupies all of chapter eleven. Scientism is "the exploitation of a particular stage of science on behalf of dreams (about man and society) far surpassing the competence or range of scientific conclusions" (p. 473). Sarcasm is generous, particularly in regard to Comte:

Deep in his heart Comte was beset by fears. He was horrified at the prospect that further research and more precise measurements might one day play havoc with what he considered to be the final word in astronomy. He could not make a truce with that

ever restive drive in science, the quest for greater precision. Haunted by such fears, he could not restrain himself from making truly desperate utterances wholly alien to the spirit of scientific investigation. "Natural laws," he warned frantically, "could not remain rigorously compatible in any case with a too detailed investigation." He called overprecise measurements "incoherent or sterile," displaying only "childish curiosity stimulated by vain ambition," and he equated concern for greater precision "with an active disorganisation" of science [pp. 470, 471].

Although Jaki "overkills" Comte, his tone grows considerably more serious when he discusses physics in that form of scientism known as Marxism. The grim description of party domination of physics somewhat speeds over the period before 1947. He quotes from D. Joravsky:

76 Worshipping science, the Bolsheviks had to raise cries of crisis in science. To make dialectical materialism an effective fighting creed in a war against ideologically alien scientists, they had to renounce faith in it as an objective description of the way that scientists discover the natural order. The union of revolutionism and scientism (nauchnost'), which Lenin had described in 1894 as the chief power of attraction of Marxism, could hardly be maintained in the face of these contradictions. To believe in one part of their doctrine the Bolsheviks had increasingly to disbelieve another. At the maddening climax of most intense belief and disbelief they shut off further discussion, 'disarmed' their intellects (the phrase was a catchword of the great break), made their minds wax in the hands of the General Committee and the chief [p. 487].¹

Jaki comes close to an "error" in a very mild overstatement that matter waves are not a necessary model for explaining particle focussing (p. 109). A more serious matter is his ridicule of natural theology (proofs of God seen in nature). It is not that he disbelieves in the existence of God; he thinks that what one sees in nature is what one has already found on "more unchangeable grounds" (p. 457). Jaki believes it is wrong to illustrate or prove something religious from scientific findings, because these findings have changed in the past and therefore will in the future. This view ignores the enduring power of Christ's parables.

A knowledge of the limitations of physics may produce a *humbling* effect (chapter twelve), but I believe it is unfortunate to destroy confidence in nature illustrations (chapter ten), for I find that these produce a *reverent* effect.

REFERENCE

- 1 D. Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science: 1917-32* (New York: Columbia University Press 1961), pp. 275-295.

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