

Letters

VandenBerg indicates that science is the study of the physical aspect of nature; consequently, its subject matter is data that can be collected, in principle, with the aid of purely physical devices. Schrödinger discovered for himself that Democritus of Abdera already understood this state of affairs in the fifth century BC, prior to the advent of the sophisticated instrumentations of today.¹ Experimental data is subsequently generalized into laws of nature. Additionally, theoretical models are constructed that lead logically to such laws and make predictions that can be experimentally tested.

Schrödinger also indicates that we construct the real world around us out of our “sensations, perceptions, and memories.”² In fact, once the “data” have been obtained, one is dealing with logical mental constructs that are assumed to be related in a faithful manner to that which is real. However, knowledge is to be contrasted to information, which is purely physical.³ For instance, neuroscientists can detect brain waves via purely physical devices. However, that physical information cannot decipher the knowledge-content underlying nonphysical human thought, which can be understood and communicated only by other conscious beings.

Humans are physical/nonphysical/supernatural beings. This is quite consistent with the Christian notion of humans as body/mind/spirit (Matt. 6:22; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:11). Therefore, the study of humans that goes beyond the physical aspect and ventures into the nonphysical/supernatural is tricky, owing to the difficulty of obtaining unambiguous and consistent data. Note that in the biological, psychological, sociological, and economic sciences, one is relying more and more on a quantifiable description of humans; this is tantamount to emphasizing the physical over the more important aspects of humans. The Bible deals with humans in historical contexts, which are not amenable to generalizations into scientific laws. In fact, the importances of the Bible are the truths it provides of the nonphysical/supernatural aspects of humans.

On the second issue, knowledge of the physical aspect of nature tells us nothing of God. Schrödinger considers the following scientific metaphysics:

- (a) the assumption that the course of natural events can be understood (hypothesis of comprehensibility)
- and (b) exclusion of or dispensing with the cognizing subject (from the understandable world-picture aspired to), who step back into the role of an external observer (objectivation).⁴

This scientific worldview is compatible with the metaphysics implied by theology. The metaphysics underlying science does not regulate all means of knowing and, so there can be no conflict between science and theology. Therefore, one must emphasize, when considering the first issue, that the subject matter of science and the argument of the Bible overlap only in the physical aspect of nature, since nature itself is a physical/nonphysical/supernatural entity owing to the existence of humans. Gould’s “nonoverlapping magisteria,” namely, science and religion, can be understood only in this sense.⁵ In addition, the Bible deals with ontological, rather than experimental issues.

The question of existence is biblically understood in terms of a Creator that continuously upholds his creation (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 1:3). Humans, created in the image of God, use their creative power to observe, reason, and attempt to understand the whole of reality. The ancient Greek aphorism, “know thyself,” is best approached by biblical truths of revelation, not by scientific knowledge. In fact, it is knowledge of Jesus the Christ that reveals who humans truly are, and that reveals his redemptive power over sin, which science can never even address.

Notes

¹Erwin Schrödinger, *What is Life? with Mind and Matter and Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 163.

²*Ibid.*, 118.

³Rolf Landauer, *Physics Today* 44, no. 5 (1991): 23–9.

⁴Erwin Schrödinger, *What is Life? and Other Scientific Essays* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 182.

⁵Stephen Jay Gould, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): 16–22. www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html

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More on the Two Books Approach

Mary VandenBerg’s article, “What General Revelation Does [and Does Not] Tell Us,” (*PSCF* 62, no.1 [2010]: 16–24) is in my opinion another attempt to discredit the “Two Book” interpretation of Scripture. For many years, I have been interested in the discoveries of science and how it all relates to biblical knowledge. In this quest, I have read many books on this subject, and attended lectures such as “The Epic of Creation” series, sponsored by the Zygon Center. All of these were interesting and informative, however, it always seemed that something was missing. Finally, Hugh Ross, founder of Reasons to Believe, began his concordant approach (*PSCF* 59, no. 1 [2007]: 46–50). This study relies on testable scientific detail from the biblical creation texts and the book of nature. The Bible is clear on the fact that God’s word includes both the words of the Bible and his words written in the heavens and the earth. For example, Ps. 19:1–4 tells us “the heavens declare the glory of God”; Ps. 85:11, “truth springs from earth and rightness looks down from heaven”; and Rom. 1:20, “For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” Such studies are never complete because new discoveries in science continue. However, in my opinion, the two-book approach is very powerful in convincing unbelievers, especially scientists, in the saving knowledge, of our Creator Jesus Christ.

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