

## Only What Science Can Confirm Is True!

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Stanley L. Jaki, philosopher of science and the winner of the Templeton Prize, in his *Gifford Lectures*, shares a brilliant story that illustrates the logical consequence of reductionism or scientism. Two ladies after a heated debate decided to take their dispute to a rabbi renowned for his Solomonic wisdom. The reason for the dispute was a cat which one lady claimed had gobbled up her five-pound piece of butter. The other lady, the owner of the cat argued that her cat did not eat the butter. The rabbi heard both sides of the argument and called for the cat. He placed the cat on the scale, the needle moved exactly to five pounds. Looking seriously at the dial, the rabbi proclaimed, "Ah, we have found the butter." With a puzzled look and scratching his head, he asked, "But now where is the cat?"

Living in our secular world, truth can be stranger than fiction. With the success of science, we speculate that only one reality exists. The mantra of our age, "Only what science can confirm is true" exists under different names - the Reduction fallacy or "Nothing Buttery" fallacy. This error takes something that is complex and reduces it to merely one of its parts. A rich diversity is reduced to a single part.

We practice this fallacy when we assert that art is nothing but frozen emotion, an explorer is a bum with an excuse, love is nothing but lust, mind is nothing but brain cells, music is nothing but sound waves, a politician is a man who sits on a fence with his ear on the ground, money is nothing but paper, a letter is nothing but paper & ink, man is nothing but a chunk of meat or a bundle of accidental atoms, and women are nothing but spare ribs.

It is like the story of the two proverbial medical students who killed a man and then dissected his body to find out where life was located. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the philosophy of Materialism.

On one occasion while lecturing at Auckland University I provoked my audience with a question to make a point, "What is the size of your

love?” After a moment of silence, one brave student volunteered to answer, “Man, she is very heavy.” A wrong answer to a wrong question.

My question was a categorical mistake. We must not confuse categories. Music is something we listen. Art is something we see. Honey is something we taste. Love is something we feel. Idea is something we think. Logic is something we reason.

The category fallacy frequently occurs even in academic circles. A simplistic view of the universe compels us to perceive reality as one-dimensional, but deeper reflection compels us to perceive reality as multi-dimensional.

Physical reality- Open to our five senses.

Mental reality- That which is intellectual.

Moral reality- That which is ethical.

Metaphysical-The Ground of reality.

It would be a categorical mistake to demand, “Bring me a plate of value. Tell me the taste of blue. Show me your brilliant idea. What is the smell of love? Blue sleeps faster than Wednesday.” If you do a chemical analysis on your love letter you will miss the real meaning of your letter.

Reductionism fails to do justice to the reality of things we experience in life. I will never forget meeting a businessman in Singapore. He makes \$30,000 profit every month, selling pepper. Hollywood has Superman and Singapore has Pepper Man. He scheduled an appointment for us to meet at a restaurant.

During the evening our conversation drifted into Science and Value. He argued passionately, “I believe in science, what science cannot prove is not true.” I took a deep breath, looked him in the eye, and pointed at his wife who was delightfully enjoying the steak. “Do you love your wife?” He looked puzzled and said “Yes!” Then I asked him. “Can you prove scientifically that you love your wife?” He looked at me astonished and said, “That’s a good answer.”

Science is a very useful tool for testing some aspects of reality but not all of reality. No one in his right mind will get ten blind men to judge a beauty contest. Science, the empirical method has no monopoly on truth. The statement *only what is provable by science is true* is not provable by science because it is a philosophical dogma. This notion is also self-refuting. Love, beauty, value, morals, honesty, virtues, logic, math, mind, and many others are beyond the domain of science. As the saying goes: No truth is as dangerous as a half-truth.

It is dangerous to tell your sweetheart, "You are a fertilized ovum moving around." The meaning of life is not found in the motion of matter. We are not just a bunch of dancing atoms. The study of matter will only provide information about matter. Truth is greater than what the eyes can see. Science can only describe it, it cannot prescribe it. It can only observe the observable. Science is a valuable gift. It needs to be honored and appreciated but scientism is a dogma without a foundation.

To use science for everything is misguided, wrong-headed, and unrealistic. Science has a significant role to play in human affairs but science has no monopoly on all of reality. Reality is multidimensional and science can only explore the material world but the metaphysical world will always remain a mystery to science.