

The Beginning of Knowledge

By David Feddes

How do you know that you know anything? How do you know that the things you think you know are real? Movies have had some fun with that kind of question.

Are your experiences just a dream? The movie *Inception* explores that question. A lot of events in that movie turn out to be just dreams, and by the end you wonder if any of it was real. The question the movie asks is a question philosophers have been asking for a very long time. How do you know that your experiences are actually experiences of a reality outside yourself and not just a dream?

Are your memories real? How do you know? The movie *Total Recall* is about someone who has had a lifetime of memories scientifically implanted in his brain, so he thinks he's had that kind of a life when in fact he has not. How do you know that what you think you remember from past years was not just implanted in your mind 45 minutes ago? It's pretty hard to say exactly why we trust our memories, but most of the time we do.

Are your senses putting you in touch with realities outside you? That's the question raised by *The Matrix*, another science fiction movie. You may think you see things, you may think you hear or smell or feel or taste things, but how do you know those things are really there? What if your senses are not really telling you about realities outside you? What if all your experiences are all just sensations being fed into you? In *The Matrix*, a bunch of humans are attached to a system of machines and computers. The computers are implanting experiences of a life into these humans, who are really not doing anything. They are lying inert in a bath, and the machines are feeding off of the heat and the electrical impulses of the human bodies. Again, this is not just a clever notion of some moviemaker. For centuries, philosophers have been asking, "How do we know that our inner experiences are in touch with a world outside of us?"

There are entire religions and systems of philosophy that say we're not in touch with a world outside of us. There is no world beyond the self. Our senses do not put us in touch with a physical reality. Most Eastern religions teach that everything that we take to be physical and every sensation that we experience is just an illusion. None of it is real.

Philosophers wonder how we can be confident that we know anything. *Epistemology* is the big word for the branch of philosophy that studies how we know what we know. To know anything about a world outside ourselves, at least two things are required: a mind that can know things, and a world that is knowable. Does your mind have the ability to know things outside it? Is the world real, and if so, does it have features that are knowable? If you're going to know anything about the world outside yourself, you need a mind that's capable of knowing, and you need a world that's capable of being known.

At this point, you might be asking why you should bother thinking about these things. Well, as I've already pointed out, there are entire religious systems that say the world is an illusion and your own mind is not reliable at all. And even if you don't follow one of those religions, you still have a problem if your outlook on life is materialism, also called naturalism.

Problems With Materialism

Among educated people in Western societies, a common worldview is materialism. What is materialism? It's the idea that nothing is real except matter and energy. Physical things are the only things that exist. There is no God, no angels, no spirit world. Even human minds and thoughts are just physical events within the brain. There is no mind independent of matter.

Materialism has a hard time answering the question of how your mind has the ability to know things outside itself, and a hard time explaining how the world has patterns that the human mind can know. Materialism offers no basis for confidence in the *intelligence* of the human mind or the *intelligibility* of the world outside the mind. Materialism says the human mind is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process called evolution. If that's what the human mind is, then is there any reason to think we have real intelligence? Materialism also says the universe is random interactions of matter flying through space. If that's what the universe is, if it's all random and accidental, how can there be any intelligible, understandable patterns? Materialism, or naturalism, embraces atheism: there is no God, no divine mind. Physical reality is all there is. But if you say that there's nothing but atoms flying through space and that the human mind is just an accident, you have lost all basis for thinking you know anything whatsoever. Materialism has no basis for confidence that our minds are intelligent or that the world is intelligible.

Don't take my word for it. Take the word of some smart atheists. Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer did not believe in God, yet he knew there was a problem with believing in materialism. He said, "Materialism is the philosophy of the subject who forgets to take account of himself." Materialism cannot account for human thinking. Atheist scientist J. B. S. Haldane said, "If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. Hence, I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms." If you think that your brain is just atoms interacting randomly, you have no reason for confidence in any belief that occurs in that random jumble of atoms—and thus no reason to believe in atoms or anything else.

Reductionism

Various forms of reductionism ignore God and reduce everything, including the human mind, to a mere byproduct of something else. But reductionism ends up destroying itself. Four of the most famous and influential reductionists have been Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Charles Darwin.

Karl Marx became famous for his economic theories and for promoting atheistic communism. Marx believed that almost everything about humans can be reduced to economics. He claimed that economic structures dictate all ideas about truth. A belief is never really true or false; it just suits somebody's economic situation or financial agenda. But if Marx was right, then we must apply Marx's economic reductionism to Marx himself. We must say that Marx's own claims were not actually truths but were accidental byproducts of his economic setting and had no basis in rationality or truth. What Marx said about others would have to apply to his own thinking as well: Marxist thinking would just be an accident of economics.

Sigmund Freud, another atheist, was one of the founders of psychology. Freud tried to explain away religious ideas by saying that belief in God springs from a deep desire for a father-figure. In fact, Freud tried to explain most beliefs in terms of underlying desires. Freud claimed that our minds are dominated by primitive urges in the unconscious that we don't understand. Freud was right to the degree that we are sometimes influenced by deep wishes and urges we are barely aware of. However, if all thinking is nothing but mental states prompted by unconscious urges and adaptation for survival, then that would apply to Freud's own theory as well: it would be wishful thinking. You get the point? If you reduce all thinking to a byproduct of unconscious urges or wishes, then you can't exempt your own thinking. The very theory you promote destroys confidence in the truth of any theory whatsoever, including your own theory.

Friedrich Nietzsche, an atheist philosopher, tried to explain almost everything in terms of the will to power. He said that claims about truth and morality are just expressions of somebody's own agenda, their desire to control things outside themselves. No doubt Nietzsche was right to some extent: people often do have a self-serving agenda when they're making claims about truth. But if *everything* people say about truth is just pushing for power, then we have no reason for confidence that we're ever in touch with truth. Human thinking does not aim for truth, said Nietzsche, but merely expresses this will to power, this desire to manipulate others. The best response is to say, "Well, Nietzsche, I'm not sure that explains everything about all human thinking, but it certainly tells me a lot about you. It tells me that *your* thinking is an attempt to manipulate others. If you say that *all* thinking is like that, I don't believe you, but I will at least take your word for it that *your* thinking is entirely manipulative and pushing your personal agenda and not in touch with the truth."

You see how in one case after another, reductionism destroys itself. If you reduce all human thinking to a byproduct of economics or psychological urges or a will to power, then you have no basis for confidence in your own mind and your own thinking.

Darwin's Doubt

Charles Darwin is another example of this. He tried to explain everything in terms of evolution apart from any design or purpose of God. According to Darwinist theory, the human brain is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process of random mutations and natural selection. Your brain is a randomly evolved piece of meat with various electrical impulses in it. That's all it is. Now, if your brain is just an accidental blob of meat with electrons firing in it, do you have any reason at all to think that any of your beliefs are in touch with reality? Do you have any basis for supposing that you know anything at all about the world?

Darwin himself put it this way. "With me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind... are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?" Many people believe Darwin's theory of evolution rather than the Bible's account of creation, and they do this in the name of being rational. But how rational is it to accept a theory that destroys rationality? If you have a theory that says all human thinking is random or the vibrations of a monkey's mind, then you have no reason to believe anything—including your own theory.

In the face of various types of atheistic reductionism, should we just agree that all human thinking is hogwash and that we know nothing? Or should we instead say that because those theories destroy the basis for any confidence in human thought, we should give up those foolish theories? Maybe we should keep our confidence that we really can know some things. Maybe we should forget Marxism, Freudianism, Nietzscheism, Darwinism, and all the other isms that try to reduce the human mind to just a byproduct of something else.

Richard Rorty, a leading postmodern philosopher in America, was a follower of Darwin. Rorty said, “The idea that one species of organism is, unlike all the others, oriented not just toward its own increased prosperity but toward Truth, is as un-Darwinian as the idea that every human being has a built-in moral compass—a conscience.” Rorty is saying that you do not have a real conscience that puts you in touch with real standards of right and wrong. You also do not have a real rationality that puts you in touch with truth and realities outside yourself.

Now, these are friends of materialism who are saying these things! The friends of materialism, the friends of naturalism, say we have no basis at all for thinking that humans are wired towards truth or goodness. So it should be no surprise that Christian thinkers would critique materialism and atheism for being irrational. Christian author G. K. Chesterton wrote,

It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, “Why should *anything* go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic? They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape.”

If all human thinking is merely movement in the brain of a bewildered ape, then we cannot know anything to be true. Yet many who hold this view claim to know things that happened billions of years ago and billions of light years away, even though they cannot explain why they would have confidence in their own mind or in any thought they are having right here and right now.

Christian writer C.S. Lewis said, “If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.” Even if we admit that on our bad days, we are pretty confused and our minds are not entirely reliable, do we really want to say that all our thoughts have no more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees? As Lewis pointed out,

The whole picture professes to depend on inferences from observed facts. Unless inference is valid, the whole picture disappears. Unless Reason is an absolute, all is in ruins. Yet those who ask me to believe this world picture also ask me to believe that Reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? It’s like upsetting a milk jug and hoping

that the way it splashes itself will give you a map of London. But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to Atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an Atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God. An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man's mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut."

If you're not going to trust theoretical reason (the ability to think clearly and logically) and practical reason (the moral ability to know right and wrong), you reduce yourself to utter ignorance. If you don't believe you have a mind designed to pursue truth or a conscience designed to pursue goodness, you should just be quiet. If your mind is open to the thought that all minds are nonsense, you've become so open-minded that your brain has fallen out. Some atheists claim that their clear, strong thinking prevents them from believing in God. But in fact their very ability to think comes from God. As Lewis puts it, "Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God."

Intelligence and Intelligibility

There are at least two essentials for knowing anything: you must have the ability to know, and the world must be knowable. To put it another way, you must be intelligent, and the world must be intelligible. People have faculties that enable us to know things outside ourselves. We are intelligent: capable of knowing reality. At the same time, reality is intelligible: the world and other persons are real and can be known to some degree. These are two absolute essentials for knowledge: we are capable of knowing, and reality is knowable.

That brings us back to the basic question: How can we be confident that our minds are intelligent and that the world is intelligible? As the brilliant Albert Einstein put it, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility. How can it be that mathematics... is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality?" Isn't it amazing that people could put together in our minds a system of symbols such as mathematics, and have it somehow correspond so closely to things in the world outside our minds that we can predict and control many things by the power of mathematics? It's a tremendous mystery how that could be—or maybe not such a mystery if we're willing to pay attention.

Mary Midgley is a philosopher who is not a committed Christian, but she knows that materialism can't account for mind and doesn't provide a basis for scientific thought. She says,

Science cannot stand alone. We cannot believe its propositions without first believing in a great many other startling things, such as the existence of the external world, the reliability of our senses, memory, and informants, and the validity of logic. If we do believe these things, we already have a world far wider than that of science. Acknowledging matter as somehow akin to and penetrated by mind is not adding a new, extravagant assumption to our existing thought- system. It is becoming aware of something we are doing already. The humbug of pretending that we could carry on intellectual life in an intrinsically

unintelligible world is akin to the humbug of pretending we could live without depending on other people.

Science is not the basis of everything else; rather, science depends on various other beliefs that are more foundational. Without such beliefs, science would go nowhere.

Why would you think about anything if thought itself were a waste of time, or if the world were not patterned in a way that corresponds to human thought? You might as well just shut off your brain and go to sleep. No, you have to believe that matter has patterns in it and something like mind all through it. C.S. Lewis writes, “Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not just reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality in which the universe has always been saturated.”

The Beginning of Knowledge

But where do you get a universe that is saturated with patterns that are rationally detectable, and human minds that have the rational ability to see those patterns? From God!

Why should we have confidence that the world is saturated with rationality? Because a supremely reasonable Being created it. The source of the world is God. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) “It is He who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens” (Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15) God’s wisdom and God’s understanding created the universe, so wisdom and understanding are embedded in the very nature of the way things are made. The world is knowable because a great Intelligence made it with patterns that could be discovered.

Why should we have confidence that our faculties can discover some of those patterns in the world and other kinds of wisdom as well? Because those faculties come from God. “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6) “He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Daniel 2:21). One of the wisest, most brilliant people who ever lived was King Solomon. Where did his ability come from? “God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure” (1 Kings 4:29). What God gave in such large measure to Solomon, he gives in various measures to other human minds: ability to understand reality.

Believing in God and revering God as the supreme reality is the beginning of knowledge. As God once asked Job, “Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind?” (Job 38:36) The answer, of course, is that God himself has done this. God gives understanding to the mind. In another place, the book of Job says, “It is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand” (Job 32:8). So if you want real, well-founded knowledge, begin with God. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

Without a world made by God and a mind designed by God, you have no basis for confidence that your mind is in touch with reality; your mind is a total accident, and the world is a total chaos. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; in revering God, you have a solid

foundation for knowledge. God has given your mind the ability to know things outside it, and God has created a real world with features that are knowable.

Faculties for Knowing

We have different faculties for knowing, and we can be confident in these. We can't be totally confident in our faculties, of course. Our abilities have limits, plus our thinking is distorted by sin and brokenness. Our faculties are not as accurate as they would have been if humanity had never fallen into sin. Even so, we can still know things. Our God-given brains are not just randomly evolved blobs of meat, and our God-given faculties are not mere accidents. We can have reasonable confidence in using them. Let's consider some of these faculties.

One type of faculty is our *senses*: our ability to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. The five senses are ways of receiving input from the world around us through our bodily equipment. We have eyes, ears, nose, taste buds, and nerve endings. We have a brain that knows how to interpret sensory signals so that we can learn things about the world outside us. God designed it that way.

Another faculty is *memory*. Our memory is not just something that's been implanted by some evil programmer to fool us. Our memory recalls real events and real experiences. Granted, our memory can be mistaken at times, but even so, we can say that a particular memory is mistaken because we are contrasting it with those times when memory is right. Materialism offers no basis for confidence that any memory is ever accurate, but the fact that memory is one of our God-given faculties means that memory is a way of connecting with reality.

Introspection is an important faculty. Introspection involves knowing things about my inner state, how I feel, what's going on inside me.

Sympathy is another valuable faculty that we rely on for knowledge. By sympathy I don't just mean feeling sorry for others, but a faculty for being aware of other persons and what others think or feel or believe. I have no logical proof that others are like me on the inside and feel things the same way I do, but somehow I just sense that humans are humans, and we feel the same things. When someone else gets punched in the nose, I take it that they feel pretty much the same pain I feel when I get punched. If someone smiles, I take it that on the inside they feel much the same way I feel when I smile. If they speak a sentence about something they believe, and if those words match something I believe, then I assume that we each hold a similar belief on the inside. Again, we can't prove by logical arguments that someone else has feelings on the inside. We can't even prove that someone else exists outside our own minds. But we still know it! We know it directly, without other proof, because our faculty of sympathy moves us to know that other personalities are real and have much in common with us as fellow humans.

Credulity is a term for believing what others tell us. Sometimes it is said that it's not rational to believe what you're told unless you examine every last thing for yourself and only allow it into your belief system if you have studied all the evidence and arguments for yourself. But the fact is, more than 99 percent of what we believe has been learned from others. This isn't just true of gossip or how to tie your shoes. It's also true of nearly everything you know about science. Your knowledge about science was not a discovery you made; you believe it because you heard it from

a teacher or a scientist or a textbook. Much of what you learn about life is learned from your parents, and that's not a bad way to learn. It's not an irrational way to learn. Credulity is a valuable faculty. Credulity helps you to know a great many things simply by believing most of the time what other people tell you, though sometimes you need sift out some mistakes and double-check what you've been told to make sure that it's correct.

Induction is expecting the future to be similar to the past. This doesn't mean the future is always an exact repetition of the past, but if something has happened again and again in the past, there's probably something going on that makes it likely to happen again in the future. The earth turns in a certain way, and the sun rises every morning, so we expect the sun will rise tomorrow. There's no absolute logical proof that the earth will continue turning or that sunrise will happen again tomorrow, but induction says, "Yes, it probably will." Induction observes that certain germs are present when a person gets sick. A researcher can say, "I think those germs are causing that sickness because I've observed in 8,700 cases that those germs were present just before a person got sick." The ability to learn from past experience is induction.

Reason is another faculty for knowing. The word "reason" can be used broadly for the whole process of thinking, but we can also use the word more narrowly. Reason is our faculty for grasping truths that are prior to, or independent of, experience. For example, reason grasps the truths of basic arithmetic. Once you learn the meaning of the equation $2 + 1 = 3$, you know that it is true. $2 + 1$ cannot equal 5. Reason includes simple logic. If all cats have whiskers, and Princess is a cat, then Princess has whiskers. We know that by logic. If something is true of all cats, then it must be true of any particular cat. If our faculty of reason is highly developed, we can see many other logical relationships and deductions. These may be much more complex than the simple examples I've mentioned. Reason has this power and reliability because it's a faculty that we have from God.

Conscience is another vital way of knowing, a faculty for getting in touch with reality. Something inside us senses whether a choice is right or wrong. Conscience can be damaged or distorted; it can be mistaken at times; but it is still a real faculty for knowing. When conscience is working properly, it senses God's smile or God's frown on various kinds of behavior. The moral awareness that comes from a properly working conscience is an awareness of reality. Moral knowledge is real knowledge.

The God-Sense

One more faculty that I want to mention is *the God-sense*. Nearly all of us have an intuitive awareness of a great and awesome Being, a sense of a mighty and mysterious Someone to whom we owe our life, Someone who has created us and everything around us. This God-sense, when it's working properly, produces awe at divine reality. The God-sense doesn't depend on logic and explanations and arguments to prove God. You know God is real in much the same way that you know other humans are real, without needing arguments to prove their existence. You know directly that God is real and awesome because this God-sense was designed by God to recognize his reality.

The Bible says, “God created man in his own image” (Genesis 1:27). Part of that image is a correspondence to God, something in us that matches God like a key matches a lock. “God has put eternity into man’s heart” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). All humans are designed with a longing for the infinite and the eternal. That’s part of the God-sense. “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts” (Proverbs 20:27). God gives each of us a spirit, and that spirit is God’s own lamp inside of us. The New Testament talks about “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18). Our hearts have eyes; that’s another way of talking about the God-sense. People who have fallen into sin and away from God have the eyes of their hearts clouded. Cataracts of sin spread over those inner eyes and blind them. We need the eyes of our hearts, the God-sense, this faculty for recognizing God, to be enlightened again so that we can see with our hearts the God who is there.

The God-sense is real, and God’s reality can be known if the God-sense is working properly and if God is sending signals. Just as eyes don’t do much unless light is shining on them, just as ears don’t do much unless sound waves are coming at them, so the God-sense wouldn’t do you much good unless God is sending signals at it. And that is exactly what God is doing; he is constantly sending signals. The Bible says, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:19-20). God’s creation conveys a sense of God’s majesty and power and divine nature, just as sound waves convey something about a stream babbling over some rocks or a violin bow being pulled on the string.

Our faculties for knowing are not only affected by our limited abilities but by our fall into sin and brokenness, and the God-sense has been affected most of all. We still have our inner eye, and God is still sending signals to it, but our sin clouds our inner eye and suppresses God’s signals. Here is how the Bible explains it:

Men... by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1:18-22)

Earlier we read, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). The fear of the Lord is awe at what God has shown of his majesty. Fools suppress God’s signals and despise what their God-sense is telling them. They either manufacture gods of their own design, or they tell themselves there is no God.

Suppressing the God sense distorts our other faculties and destroys the real basis for confidence that we know anything. We’ve seen that if you reject God, you also reject the only basis for confidence that your mind has the capacity to know and that the world is knowable. “Claiming to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). “The fool [not the genius] says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1, 53:1). Rejecting God and suppressing any sense of awe at God affects

us mentally and morally. Scripture says of the sinful unbeliever, “There is no fear of God before his eyes...he has ceased to be wise and to do good... For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light” (Psalm 36).

Logos and Light

Without God’s light, we are in darkness. C. S. Lewis was an atheist for years. But as he thought more deeply, he realized that atheism gave him no basis for knowledge. While he was struggling with this, he also had a growing, direct sense of God’s reality. At last Lewis gave up on his atheism, got down on his knees before the One he had tried to avoid, and reluctantly admitted that God is God. Lewis later described what was going through his mind when he realized that his atheistic materialism destroyed confidence in the human mind: “Unless I were to admit an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*.” The word “epiphenomenon” means that something is just a byproduct of something else. Lewis realized that if the mind were just an accidental byproduct of atoms or chemicals or economics or unconscious urges, then there would be no basis to suppose that humans can know truth. Lewis found it literally unbelievable to think that mind was just an accidental illusion that came along late in the process of evolution. For his own mind to mean anything, he had to admit that the whole universe was at its deepest level mental, that all human logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*. *Logos* is a Greek term for “word” or “logic.” In John 1, the Bible says,

In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1-14)

The Word, the *Logos*, is Jesus Christ. Through Him, all things were made. In Him was light and that light was the light of men. He is the logic of the universe. His light is the light that gives everybody else their light, their intelligence and knowledge. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is not only the greatest of all men, the brilliant teacher and miracle worker from Nazareth, but he is also the eternal Word, the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, who has existed forever with God before becoming human.

When God created in the beginning, the patterns of the universe were the patterns in the mind of the living Word, whom we now know as the Lord Jesus Christ. The divine *Logos* was, and is, the Logic of the universe, the personal Power and Intelligence through whom everything was made. The *Logos* is the reason human minds are capable of knowing. The *Logos* is the reason the universe has patterns that can be known. This living Logic of the universe became one of us to save us and to bring us back to himself. Jesus “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17) He is the eternal Word, the Logic of the world and the Light of human intellect.

Summary: The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord.

- The realities we know about begin with God: He is the Source of all realities, their patterns, and their purposes.
- Our ability to know begins with God: He is Source of our mental faculties. Only because of his great mind can we have any confidence in the workings of our much lesser minds.
- Jesus is the eternal Logos, the Logic of the world and the Light of human intellect.
- Ignoring God darkens and distorts knowledge.
- Taking God seriously enlightens our minds and sheds light on realities around us.

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Slide Contents

Inception: Are your experiences just a dream?

Total Recall: Are your memories real?

The Matrix: Are your senses putting you in touch with realities outside you?

Does your mind have ability to know things outside it?
Is the world real and does it have features that are knowable?

Materialism/Naturalism

Intelligence? The mind is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process.

Intelligibility? The universe is random interactions of matter flying through space.

No basis for confidence that our minds are intelligent and the world is intelligible

Just atoms in a brain?

Materialism is the philosophy of the subject who forgets to take account of himself. (Arthur Schopenhauer)

If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true... and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms. (J.B.S. Haldane)

Marx's reductionism

Karl Marx claimed economic structures dictated all ideas about truth. If so, then Marx's own ideas were not actually truths but were accidental byproducts of his economic setting and had no basis in rationality or truth.

Freud's reductionism

Sigmund Freud claimed that unconscious primeval urges dominate our mind. Wishes can be a factor, but if thinking is nothing but mental states prompted by wishes, then Freud's own theory would have to be wishful thinking.

Nietzsche's reductionism

Friedrich Nietzsche said that claims about truth or morality are just expressions of someone's agenda, their desire to control things outside themselves. Human thinking does not aim not for truth but merely expresses this will to power.

Darwin's reductionism

The human brain is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process. It is a randomly evolved piece of meat with various electrical impulses within it.

Can any thinking be trusted?

With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of a man's mind... are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind? (Charles Darwin)

Not made for truth or goodness?

The idea that one species of organism is, unlike all the others, oriented not just toward its own increased prosperity but toward Truth, is as un-Darwinian as the idea that every human being has a built-in moral compass—a conscience. (Richard Rorty)

A bewildered ape?

It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, "Why should *anything* go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic?" They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape. (G. K. Chesterton)

Wind in the trees?

If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. (C. S. Lewis)

By-product of mindless matter?

The whole picture professes to depend on inferences from observed facts. Unless inference is valid, the whole picture disappears. Unless Reason is an absolute, all is in ruins. Yet those who ask me to believe this world picture also ask me to believe that Reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. (C. S. Lewis)

How can I trust my thinking?

Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? (C. S. Lewis)

Believe in thought?

It's like upsetting a milk jug and hoping that the way it splashes itself will give you a map of London. But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to Atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an Atheist, or anything else. **Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.** (C. S. Lewis)

Open mind?

An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man's mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut. (C. S. Lewis)

Your mind must have ability to know things outside it.
Your mind must have ability to know things outside it.

Knowing reality outside us

Intelligence: People have faculties that enable us to know things outside ourselves. We are intelligent: capable of knowing reality.

Intelligibility: the world and other persons are real and can be known. Reality is intelligible (knowable).

How can we be confident that our minds are intelligent and the world is intelligible?

Mystery of the world

The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility. How can it be that mathematics ... is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality? (Albert Einstein)

Before science

Science cannot stand alone. We cannot believe its propositions without first believing in a great many other startling things, such as the existence of the external world, the reliability of our senses, memory and informants, and the validity of logic. If we do believe these things, we already have a world far wider than that of science. (Mary Midgley).

Matter penetrated by mind

Acknowledging matter as somehow akin to and penetrated by mind is not adding a new, extravagant assumption to our existing thought-system. It is becoming aware of something we are doing already. The humbug of pretending that we could carry on intellectual life in an intrinsically unintelligible world is akin to the humbug of pretending that we could live without depending on other people. (Mary Midgley).

Universe saturated with rationality

Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated. (C. S. Lewis)

Source of the world

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15)

Source of understanding

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding (Daniel 2:21)

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure. (1 Kings 4:29)

The beginning of knowledge

Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind? (Job 38:36)

It is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. (Job 32:8)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

God gives your mind the ability to know things outside it.

God made a real world with features that are knowable.

Faculties for knowing

Senses: see, hear, smell, taste, touch

Memory: recalling events and experiences

Introspection: knowing things about my inner state

Sympathy: awareness of what others think, feel, and believe

Credulity: believing what others tell us

Induction: expecting the future to be like the past in some sense; learning from experience

Faculties for knowing

- **Reason:** grasping truths that are prior to, or independent, of experience
 - Basic arithmetic ($2+1=3$)
 - Simple logic: If all cats have whiskers, and Princess is a cat, Princess has whiskers.
 - Seeing logical relationships and deductions
- **Conscience:** sense of right and wrong
- **God-sense:** awe at divine reality

The God sense

- God created man in his own image. (Genesis 1:27)
- He has put eternity into man's heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)
- The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts. (Proverbs 20:27)

- ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened (Ephesians 1:18)

God's reality can be sensed

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. (Romans 1:19-20)

Suppressing the God sense

Men... by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.** (Romans 1:18-22)

Becoming fools

- Suppressing the God sense distorts our other faculties and destroys the real basis for confidence that we know anything.
- The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." (Psalm 14:1, 53:1)
- There is no fear of God before his eyes... he has ceased to be wise and to do good... For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. (Psalm 36)

Logic participates in *Logos*

Unless I were to admit an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*" (C. S. Lewis)

***Logos* and Light**

In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1-14)

Original Image of God

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Jesus is the eternal Logos, the logic of the world and the light of human intellect.

Beginning of Knowledge

- The realities we know about begin with God: He is the Source of all realities, their patterns, and their purposes.
- Our ability to know begins with God: He is Source of our mental faculties.
- Jesus is the eternal Logos, the logic of the world and the light of human intellect.
- Ignoring God darkens and distorts knowledge.
- Taking God seriously enlightens our minds and sheds light on realities around us.