

William S. Hatcher

Cycle of Lectures on Universal and Contemporary Themes.

1. Love, Power and Justice.

We trace various historic injustices, such as slavery and the mistreatment of women. We advance the thesis that the origin and root cause of such injustices is the pursuit of power as an end in itself (not just the misdirected use or exercise of power). Powerseeking, in turn, derives from the universal self-perception that we lack intrinsic value and must, therefore, seek our value from others and from society through various power-based strategies of dominance and manipulation. We then consider various positive strategies, both social and individual, for replacing the pursuit of power by the pursuit of justice and of love.

2. True Religion is not an Ideology.

History has witnessed the birth and proliferation of manifold ideologies and belief systems. With regard to their specific philosophical content, ideologies may be different or even contradictory, but they all share one common feature: *they hold that certain ideas or beliefs are more important (have higher value) than human beings.* We might call this the *characteristic meta-belief of all ideological systems.* Once this meta-belief is accepted, it then becomes legitimate to sacrifice the quality of human life for the preservation of certain ideas, as has happened both with religious ideologies (e.g., the Inquisition in Christianity) and secular ideologies (e.g., Fascism and Communism).

We put forth a non-ideological approach to social belief systems, which holds that the establishment of authentic human relations, based on love and altruism, constitutes the highest value for the human being – higher than any given set of ideas. From this non-ideological point of view, ideas, beliefs and principles are to serve the human being and not the human being to be sacrificed for the propagation of any set of ideas or principles.

3. The Concept of Human Value.

The concept each individual has of his own worth or value is largely derived from his view of the nature of the human being. *Individualism* attributes value only to those who have demonstrated special abilities. The demonstration of special abilities is usually pursued through competition at all levels of society. Human relations in a competitive milieu tend to be conflictual and antagonistic. *Collectivism* considers that the individual has only an *extrinsic value* that is given him by society. Collectivism leads to the pursuit of power, as each individual tries to gain a position in society that gives him the power to compel others to recognize his value.

We propose an alternative view that the true value of each human being is both *intrinsic* and *universal*, deriving from the spiritual capacities inherent in the immortal soul of the person. This conception frees the individual from the compulsion to seek power over others and from the necessity of demonstrating special ability in order to achieve self-worth. It therefore allows the individual to be himself in the full dimension of his humanity, regardless of the various particular roles he may play in society – roles which are often dependent on material circumstances having little to do with the true spiritual value of the person.

4. Social Ethics and Individual Development.

Everyone acknowledges that human society cannot function unless the majority of individuals in society adhere to certain minimal ethical norms of cooperation and social responsibility. However, most ethical systems are based on the assumption that there is an intrinsic, logical opposition between the good of the individual and the good of society as a whole. Viewed in this way, any given social system appears as an uneasy compromise in which some degree of individual self-realization must be sacrificed for the sake of social order.

We challenge this assumption and advance the thesis of a total harmony between the achievement of true individual moral autonomy and well-being, on one hand, and a stable, progressive social order, on the other. Indeed, we claim that, when properly viewed, the processes of personal and social development are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Our conception of morality is *dynamic* and sees ethical behaviour not as an end in itself but as the natural result of the pursuit of true moral autonomy and well-being, through an increasingly self-aware dialogue (relationship) of the self with itself, the self with God, and the self with others. The motive force of this dynamic process is the passionate pursuit of authentic relationships at all levels of human interaction. Thus, the *direction* of moral development is given absolutely, but its implementation in terms of ethical norms is relative and progressive.

5. The Unity of Religion and Science.

The traditional view of the relationship between science and religion holds that science is rational knowledge about the physical, visible, observable world, while religion represents (largely irrational or superstitious) belief about an imaginary, insubstantial, unseen world. But this view is surely wrong, because science itself has established the existence of a fascinating world of unobservable forces and entities such as gravity or electromagnetic force.

We will see that religion is most properly viewed as a knowledge-seeking enterprise, like science, rather than an ideological, belief-affirming enterprise, as it is so often perceived. In fact, we will see how religion and science represent complementary and mutually reinforcing articulations of the same basic reality, science being a minimalist articulation of this reality (i.e., *logic* or the form of the word) and religion a maximalist articulation (i.e., *logos* or the spirit of the word).

6. A Logical Proof of the Existence of God.

All rational understanding of the structure of reality is based on the *causality relation*, which holds between two phenomena A and B whenever the phenomenon A *is a cause of* or *produces* the phenomenon B. (This latter implies that whenever A occurs B must also occur: we cannot have A without B.) On the basis of three purely logical properties of the causality relation, we deduce logically the existence of a unique uncaused, universal cause G. G is thus an objectively-existing, self-caused entity which has generated, either directly or indirectly, every other existent. G is therefore God – the unique Creator of all existence.

Moreover, our three logical principles are all universal propositions, which therefore do not directly posit the existence of anything. Thus, anyone (an atheist) who denies any of these principles must affirm their negations and thereby commit

himself to belief in the objective existence of certain abstract entities. We thus conclude that *nihilistic atheism* – disbelief in the existence of any abstract entities whatever – is untenable on the basis of pure logic alone. Finally, we examine certain practical consequences of our proof.

7. Is Universal Culture Possible?

Shared cultures grow out of shared experience. Until now, human history has produced only particular, local or national cultures. Though one can perceive a few universal themes that emerge in some form in each culture (e.g., love, suffering, death), no truly universal human culture presently exists. We have instead only the *universal confrontation of relative, national cultures*.

We advance the thesis that a truly universal culture is both theoretically and practically achievable. Moreover, we claim that if the transition to a universal culture is managed in a proper way, no truly valuable elements of any particular culture or history will be lost. On the contrary, universal culture will benefit from the particular experience of each cultural tradition, just as society benefits from the variety of capacities of its individual members.

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William S. Hatcher is a mathematician, philosopher and educator. He holds a Doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, as well as Master's and Bachelor's degrees from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. A specialist in the philosophical interpenetration of science and religion, he has, for over thirty-five years, held university positions and lectured widely in North America, Europe and Russia.

He is the author or co-author of over fifty professional articles, books and monographs in the mathematical sciences, logic and philosophy. Among his works are *The Logical Foundations of Mathematics*; Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1982; *The Bahá'í Faith* (co-authored with J. Douglas Martin), Harper & Row (now Harper-Collins), San Francisco, 1985 (designated as a 'book of the year' in religion by the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1986); *Logic and Logos*, George Ronald, Oxford, 1990, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 1998, 2002; *Minimalism, a Bridge Between Classical Philosophy and the Baha'i Faith*, 2002; *2nd edition 2004*. Professor Hatcher is listed as one of eight Platonist philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century. In the *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).