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Veridicalism and Empiricism

His reply to me is that I am “patently” absurd. Page 98. Maybe you’ll agree with him on that point. Well, I don’t mind him calling me “patently”, he doesn’t mention me by name, but at any rate he says that. Following this charge of absurdity, he claims that the laws of logic are not derived from the Bible. His argument requires the assertion that the laws cannot be so derived. My answer is that every declarative sentence, in fact even questions and commands, are examples of logic. Not only so, but my brilliant colleague Professor J.C. Keister has deduced, deduced, detailed arithmetic from the Bible. And we, that is Keister and myself, are both confident that he will succeed in deducing calculus also, in detail. Now, one of my opponents who published something a little while ago, I forget how long, tried to refute me by saying, “well of course you can’t get calculus from the Bible.” But you can, and Keister is going to do it. We both know the reason why we say it can be done, Keister has not actually worked out all the detail yet, but he can do it easily enough. He has worked out the details in arithmetic in great detail. You would be surprised at the amount of theoretical arithmetic that you find in the Scriptures, but most people don’t realize what they are reading.

I had come to a point where I was saying that not only arithmetic but calculus also could be validly deduced from the assertions of Scripture. As one proceeds, the sensory basis of Hannah’s philosophy becomes more and more apparent. We may admit that the ontological starting point – though, starting point of what is not made clear – the ontological starting point is the Triune God. You will find this on page 101.1. This is irrelevant, for, the whole question is how is knowledge possible. How do we know what the ontological starting point is? Hannah answers, .2, “the epistemological starting point is personal awareness focused in sensory introspective and intellective apprehensions.” The only meaningful words in the sentence are “sensory awareness”, namely sensations. If he tries to explain “intellective apprehension,” he has passed beyond, or retreated from, allegedly given objective sense data into the a priori and

becomes a Presuppositionalist *malgré lui* [of extraordinary talent]. If he avoids the a priori, one must ask how he gets to know God; notice he said, “the Triune God.” Have any Australian Aborigines, or cultured English philosophers, ever arrived at a knowledge of the Trinity through personal awareness of sensation? This is “patently” absurd. That phrase occurred in another context a while back if you remember. At least I find it most confusing. Hannah tried to explain as follows:

“The second step is the recognition and distinction between givens and assumptions. What is given (this is a quotation from Hannah) what is given? Generically described, it is whatever presents itself to awareness. That is, is not postulated or based on postulation. And second, does so directly, that is, without being inferred or derived by any discursive reasoning. And third, can be veridically collaborated by reflective examination.”

That is page 101. Now, I’ll read it over again so you can think of it a little more...

“What is given? Generically described, it is whatever presents itself to awareness. That is, is not postulated or based on postulation. And second, does so directly, that is, without being inferred or derived by any discursive reasoning. And third, can be veridically collaborated by reflective examination.”

One must now raise the question, is there anything at all that satisfies these three conditions. One must also ask are the conditions clear. Point one seems to say that a person cannot be aware of anything he postulates. Nor of anything he derives from the axioms. Hannah defines awareness as non-postulation. Why then use the term “awareness?” The second condition was that the non-postulated object cannot be derived by discursive, or deductive, reasoning. But, this is not a second condition; it merely repeats half of the first condition, namely, not based on postulation. Very well then, we cannot be aware of axioms and theorems. The third condition was, veridically corroborated by reflective examination. Now, either the term veridically refers to Hannah’s own veridicalism, and in this case is a begging of the question, or with the phrase “reflective examination” it refers to some deductive process excluded in the prior conditions. At any rate, he does not give an example of any knowledge that fits these conditions.

One must press the point. Does he know that David was king of Israel, that ocotillos are not cacti, and that  $E=MC$  squared? If so, how? A particular example, explained in detail, would have been most acceptable.

In working out his theory positively, Hannah reasonably wants to contrast it with his opponent's views. But here, his descriptive statements are not so accurate as the earlier ones. His descriptive statements of his opponent's views are not so accurate as earlier in the book. On page 104 he asserts, "Presuppositionism errs in its tendency to interpret rational justification as the application of human criteria to divine truth." This is plainly false. The accusation might be true if charged against existentialism, empiricism, or Arminianism. It also seems to apply to Hannah's own Veridicalism. But not to Calvinism. There may be several varieties of Presuppositionalism. Earlier Hannah apparently put Barth and religious existentialists into this category. But, these people reject the universal applicability of logic and give no rational justification of their paradoxes. Brunner held that God and the medium of conceptuality are mutually exclusive. *Sie schliessen einander aus*, verbatim quotation. But, other Presuppositionalists, I would not call Brunner a Presuppositionalist, other Presuppositionalists presuppose the inerrancy of Scripture. They find the norms of logic embedded in the Bible and therefore they regard God as a rational, rather than an irrational, being. Hence, they do not use human criteria to judge divine revelation. Christ is the logic and wisdom of God. His mind is revealed in Scripture. We were created as the image of God, that is, as rational beings. Hence, Hannah's statement is just plain false. Or, does he mean that while man cannot think that the number 4 is both odd and even, God can and does? Mere human arithmetic must do for our check stubs, but for God and His divine arithmetic,  $2 + 2 = 5$ . For us, David was king of Israel but not of Uganda, while for God, who does not use our merely human logic, David was both. On the contrary, there is only one logic. It is divine and that is the logic we ought to, and sometimes do, use.

Again, there comes the matter of particular examples. On this same page, 104, on this same page he says, "since there are extra biblical truths, and since truth is formally one, Veridicalism holds that it is legitimate to appeal to corroborative factors which are available to man universally." But, this must be a non-empirical, a priori, presuppositionalist assumption for

him. He has nowhere shown that there are extra biblical truths. Nor has he shown how his independent givens can fit into a system formally one. Nor does he offer any argument that there are corroborative factors available to man universally. Nor how he could discover anything true about every man in the past and every man in the future. This is all presuppositional, and therefore he should not use such principles.

Hannah also has some other presuppositions. To summarize a little too briefly, pages 111 and 112 argue that justification cannot stop at a first truth but must regress into infinity because a first truth is Presuppositional and Presuppositionalism is bad. By calling these presuppositions another name, such as intellectually apprehensible givens, Hannah seems to include universals in the groundwork of his theory. But, the more obvious candidates for givens are sensory data. Data means givens. On page 116 he mentions “eyes, optical nerves, etc.” Etc. is in his book, it’s his statement, that’s part of the quotation. Page 122 mentions “smelling a rose” and then “physiological and environmental conditions,” on page 124. “Sense consciousness is the basis or starting point of knowledge,” from page 131. Note that the latter one is an unmodified assertion of empiricism. I’ll read it again, “Sense consciousness is the basis or starting point of knowledge.” That’s an unmodified assertion of empiricism.

Audience: Did you say since or sense?

S E N S E Sense consciousness. Since would be a conjunction and would require a main verb but, no, this is the main clause. Sense consciousness is the basis or starting point of knowledge. Page 131. Note that the latter is an unmodified assertion of Empiricism.

All knowledge is based on sensation. How then can he claim to have found a philoso – to have founded I guess or maybe to have found a philosophy – mid way between a priorism and empiricism? Again he says, “I am aware of sensory objects; I do not know these realities by inference, but through the neurological systems and environmental conditions.” Page 133 and 134. How can he tell what effects his neurological systems has produced in his sensory experience? And where did he get his information on environmental conditions? Is not this all a circular begging of the question?

Living on a ridge of a mountain and having some 50 trees on my half acre of lawn, I see out my window the glistening results of an ice storm. Every small twig is brilliant with colours; reds, blues, yellows, purples sparkle, and some greens. That is, I have such sensations. Does this mean that the twigs are red, blue, and yellow? Does it mean that ice is red, green, and blue? Is there anything out there that is red, blue, or purple? Empiricists tell us, though of course I do not credit any empirical statements, the empiricists tell us that dogs do not see colour. Then is not colour, certainly the particular colour, the effect of neurological apparatus? Some people say that ice and tree have no colour, but that the sun has these colours. They are transmitted to us by vibrations in the aether. How vibrations in an unperceived aether can be coloured, I don't know. At any rate, nearly all scientists say there is no aether. Light consists of invisible particles. Are some of these invisible particles green and others red? I may indeed see red and green sensations, but is anything out there red or green? As for what is in my mind, when looking at a colour, my art instructor and I do not agree as to which tube of paint I should squeeze.

My conclusion is that empiricism, and Hannah's Veridicalism, are, or is, utterly impossible. And if there is not a third choice between having presuppositions and having no presuppositions, and if knowledge is to be shown possible, only Presuppositionalism offers any hope. That's the end of that. Now if you wish to ask a few questions, well and good.

Let me just repeat one particular example that I gave before. Presumably, you have a perception of something black. I'm not sure you do because I think some artist would squeeze red out of their tubes to paint this or others will make it some other colours; they see wonderful things you know. But presumably, or let's assume, that you have a perception of black. But, the people who have most seriously tried to investigate what you see insist that there is nothing black here, that there is nothing that reaches from one finger to the other, that 99 and 44 one hundredths of this length is absolutely empty space, has nothing in it at all, of course it is quite invisible, and that there may be a few little invisible particles between the two ends. Hence, according to science, which presumably is the most accurate and most complete development out of sensation, the result is you do not see what is here.

The people who insist that all knowledge arises from sensation are best exemplified in the scientific procedures; the scientists are the people who most explicitly, deliberately, and carefully

examine sensation. Because they do it so thoroughly, we may suppose that their accounts of what they see are likely to be more accurate than the accounts of people who are more sloppy. Now then, they assert that there is no connection, no two things connected, between my two fingers. That what is between my fingers is almost entirely empty space, nothing at all, and that what is between my two fingers, certain things separated very far from one another, are invisible. That is the conclusion of those who have paid most attention to what is thought of as sensation. And hence, it would follow, that on the empirical, scientific basis, what you see is not a pen at all. It's mostly nothing, and what is something is totally invisible that you've never seen.

Now, for this hour I wish to continue what I call the introductory lecture. The other day we arrived at the beginning point of my objections to Empiricism, and I want to stress this by considerable detail for the reason that Empiricism, even if it is not called by that name, seems to be the sort of natural idea everybody has ordinarily (they think they learn by experience and in a certain way they think that's the common sense affair and so they're sort of inclined to take that position without thinking). So, I want to spend a little more time on this argument and, it really oughta need, but, I noticed some people in this class asked some nice questions in defense of Empiricism. I'll see if I can't bat them down.

The other day, I referred to Escher's artwork which I hope you have looked up by this time, and also to the rose that wasn't there, and similar to the rose I think I mentioned I would tell you about our course in physics in the University of Pennsylvania. One day of it, I don't think I will repeat the whole course. But, this was a lecture hour, it wasn't laboratory, but the professor had a long table in front of him, almost the size of the width of the room but of course the place right come around, and there were Bunsen burners with a hose that came from back here, you know, that connect with the petcock. And, this day we came in and there were two Bunsen burners, 6 or 8 feet apart, a good distance for a table, went nearly the width of the room, they were burning, those two Bunsen burners were burning, they stood here on the table, and the rubber hose came across here, went underneath where we had seen before that there were petcocks. And, the professor began with some introductory material. We didn't know exactly what he wanted to do, but he started to explain. And as he was explaining, he started to be a little nervous and he picked up a rubber tube and pulled it out and looked at it. There's the chute from

here down, and the Bunsen burner was still burning and it wasn't attached to the petcock at all. They kept on cooking and he didn't say anything. Finally, he got a little more nervous and pulled the Bunsen burner out and the flame was still burning without the burner there. Well we could see it very plainly. No gas, no Bunsen burner, but the burning flame.

Well? I will give you another illustration.

This is an experiment you can do yourselves if you have one piece of the equipment. Take a piece of shiny white cardboard, and better cut it in a circle, then paint half of the white cardboard with the blackest India ink you can find. Just make half of it just black, black black. And then on the other half, take a pen and make a few squiggles. You know, 3, 4, 5, or 6 little squiggles. Don't fill up the whole half, just a few little squiggles. Then if you have a, I suppose, some sort of a drill, because a Victrola turntable doesn't go fast enough. We want something that goes faster than 78 let alone 33 is it? But get something that goes good and fast and attach it to this circle that you have made and get it going as many rpms as you possibly can do. Let me ask you, what colours will you see? Anyone else want to make a better guess? Grey... well that's a better guess but it's just as wrong. Yes? What's that? Just about, ya. Yes you'll see red and green and blue and purple and... so what colour is the piece of cardboard?

Let me tell you another story. I recommend a course in physics, you know. It's a very interesting subject. Down in, at Lookout Mountain, we don't have the winters that you have up here, winter hardly ever lasts longer than two months and usually not that long. And, although we do have some cold weather it doesn't stay so cold so long. It hardly ever gets down to zero. We did have two bad winters in a row though a while back, but usually the coldest weather is around 15 degrees. And, the total accumulation of snow for this past winter, all winter, was about an eighth of an inch. It didn't even cover the roadways, it stayed on the grass a little bit for a few hours. But however, there was a sort of an icing of the trees and this morning, the morning I am talking about, I could look out and see the trees, I have about 50 trees on my front lawn and some behind the house too, and they were very, very beautiful. There was ice on the branches and twigs and I saw brilliant reds and blues and greens and yellows and dazzling whites. Oh, I could see them very clearly, they were brilliant. Well now, do you suppose that the twigs are red and green and blue and so on? Oh I don't suppose you do. Yes? <question from audience> I'll take

that one step after, I have another step in-between. The in-between step is, oh you would say that the twigs aren't that colour, the ice is. But, I thought that ice had no colour at all, that it was transparent. And yet, I saw reds and blues and greens and on and on. But, you say what? Oh ya, so there are wave lengths that come through the universal aether that we see. The trouble with that is the aether vanished about 1880 and hasn't been found since and there isn't anything for the waves to wave in. One of the current theories is that light comes in a corpuscular form, and hence you have little reds and blues and green corpuscles coming down from the sky. The trouble is I have never seen any of them.

However, these clever psychological phenomenon that I have been talking about – for instance it happens every so often, I usually want to take a nap in the afternoon because I want to work in the evening and I can't work 3 sections of the day, but often in the afternoon the telephone bell wakes me up, I run to the phone and there hasn't been any bell, but I heard the telephone bell ring, this has happened to me many times, I hear a bell that hasn't ever rung –well, these psychological phenomenon are not the most important objection to dependence on sensation. In addition to these exceptional cases – well now you know the story of the rancher in Texas? He was driving in his pickup, across his hundred square mile ranch, and he saw a body of water, a pool, a little lake, a small lake in front of him. He said, “oh, that's a mirage, there are all of these mirages in Texas, that's a mirage and I'm just going to drive through it.” Then he got stuck in the mud. In addition to these exceptional cases, sensation is subject to constant deficiencies. First, sensation is dependent on sense organs, and the various organs of living beings – that is animals, of course plants don't have the sense of sight – but the organs of animals are different. And they function differently. For example, dogs hear and smell what we cannot. Now, we can see colours that they cannot. Now then, how are you going to explain that? Do we have colour hallucinations and are the dog's eyes really correct? Or, does the dog have auditory hallucinations and we hear correctly? Which? Neither, well all right.

Now next. Our organs change, either by reason of age or by reason of disease. These changes usually occur without our knowing it. Hence, we are often, or almost always, deceived. For instance, I'll give you a personal example. What I see with my right eye I don't see with my left and vice versa. I have two quite different sensations. By looking in the same direction, if I

shut one eye or if I shut the other. Now which eye is correct? And furthermore, although I happen to know that, and these glasses don't change it either, you may have those troubles too as I did for a long time without knowing it. And there may be other changes in your retina or in your optical nerve, which you're not acquainted with, and yet which makes you see differently from other people. Now, whose eyes are correct and who's eyes aren't? Or, which eye... and so on.

Then next, I'll give the general principle later but I'll give an example first. There were some of you who knew Escher's drawings. But, I suppose all of you have seen some paintings haven't you? They just put a bunch up in the library, in the hallway in the library yesterday, maybe you've seen them. Sort of a seascapes, most of them. Now then, if you will take a piece of canvas and paint half of it a brilliant red and the lower half a brilliant blue – or any other two contrasting colours it doesn't have to be red and blue, but they will do, two contrasting colours, then you better let it dry for the next step – mix up some white and black into a grey. If you mix white and black you will probably see grey. But now, pick up some of this grey paint on your brush and pull it down right across both parts of the canvas. What colour will you see in that stroke? Grey? No, none of it will be grey. Some of it might be pink, some of it green, but at any rate it won't be grey. And yet, the two colours you see were all made by the same mixture of paint on your brush. And that is true all the time. Everything is seen against a background and hence the colour changes with the background. So, the thing that you say is red isn't red. It's only red so long as it's against a given background, against a blue background maybe, or something like that. And hence, you have no idea what a thing's colour really is. You have to conclude that really it is no colour. At any rate, we always see something against a background, and the object that you see changes its colour with a different background. Which indicates you can never see its own colour because it never appears by itself. It always appears against a background.

Well, these difficulties occur on the lower levels of sensation. Further difficulties occur as we rise higher. The question is, how can we confidently develop sensations into perceptions. Now so far we have been just talking about sensations, but how from sensations can you ever get perceptions? And I must say, as politely as I can possibly do, that my opponents refuse to answer

the question. I've asked it of several people and they won't answer, but I still ask. How can you develop perceptions from sensations?