

Noetic Science and the Principles Of Freemasonry

By Bud Ramsey

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What do I mean when I refer to “Noetic Science”? Well, I don’t mean a scientific study with no etiquette involved. If you have read Dan Brown’s book “The Lost Symbol”, you may recall that it was mentioned as the field of study being done by Katherine Solomon, one of the main characters. Granted, what they did with it in the book was a bit farfetched but it made the story more interesting and provided some food for thought. According to the Institute of Noetic Science, it is as follows:

noetic: From the Greek *noēsis / noētikos*, meaning inner wisdom, direct knowing, or subjective understanding.

science: Systems of acquiring knowledge that use observation, experimentation, and replication to describe and explain natural phenomena.

noetic sciences: A multidisciplinary field that brings objective scientific tools and techniques together with subjective inner knowing to study the full range of human experiences.

Looking at conventional science, the kind you are familiar with from school, it is viewed as a method of acquiring knowledge about the natural world using the scientific method (and, in its modern applications that include mankind’s contribution to the world through technology, medicine, etc.). The scientific method is based on the observation, description and experimental investigation of natural phenomena, such that hypotheses and theories can be offered to explain aspects of nature, and experiments can be conducted and replicated by others to test those theories.

So now you might be saying “What? What did he say!?!?” I’m saying that conventional science means you can do things to show that what you’re saying works, makes sense, and can be tested.

While we tend to think of science as logical and factual, and view it as offering scientific truths and natural laws that are unchanging and incontestable, the baseline tenet of science is that its claims must be falsifiable—that is, they must be able to be tested and proved wrong. That’s how

science differs from religion, which is based on faith or belief and is not inherently testable or its claims falsifiable.

With regard to religion, I once read a book called *Illusions*, by Richard Bach, and in it, it referred to a *Messiah's Handbook* that was used to guide and direct. An unusual aspect of this handbook is that it has no page numbers. The reason for this, is that theoretically the book will open to the page on which the reader may find guidance or the answers to doubts and questions in his mind. Spoiler alert: The last page of the book has on it something that should probably be included at the end of every religious doctrine. It says, "Everything above may be wrong!" Religion is not inherently testable or its claims falsifiable because it's based on faith.

And that's also why one constant of science is that it is always changing. New knowledge and understandings are continually overturning even the most basic concepts of science. We all know how Copernicus overturned the conventional thought of the time that the earth was the center of the universe by theorizing that the earth revolves around the sun, and then Galileo confirmed that theory by providing evidence. Their contribution fundamentally changed our conception of our place in the cosmos, an upheaval in thinking that, in the case of Copernicus, was dubbed the "Copernican revolution." Science advances by overturning what was once accepted as "truth" by providing evidence for a more complete truth or a substantially revised truth. That's why, as British philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke said, "We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature." That overturning, that change, may be so startling and unexpected that it is felt to be revolutionary. The evidence noetic scientists are amassing heralds that we are on the cusp of a major revolution not only in our conception of ourselves but of our understanding of how the universe works.¹

Research shows that for centuries, philosophers, from the time of Plato forward, have used the term *noetic* to refer to experiences that William James, a pioneering psychologist circa 1902, described as:

"...states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority."

¹ Science of the Lost Symbol web site

The term *noetic sciences* was first coined in 1973 when the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) was founded by Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell, who two years earlier became the sixth man to walk on the moon. Ironically, it was the trip back home that Mitchell recalls most, during which he felt a profound sense of universal connectedness—what he later described as a *samadhi* experience. In Mitchell’s own words, “The presence of divinity became almost palpable, and I knew that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes. . . .The knowledge came to me directly.”

It led him to conclude that reality is more complex, subtle, and mysterious than conventional science had led him to believe. Perhaps a deeper understanding of consciousness (inner space) could lead to a new and expanded understanding of reality in which objective and subjective, outer and inner, are understood as co-equal aspects of the miracle of being. It was this intersection of knowledge systems that led Dr. Mitchell to launch the interdisciplinary field of noetic sciences. ²

According to an article in the Huffington Post, there are several ways we can know the world around us. Science focuses on external observation and is grounded in objective evaluation, measurement, and experimentation. This is useful in increasing objectivity and reducing bias and inaccuracy as we interpret what we observe.

So, another way of “knowing”, and one that should be a concept familiar to Masons, is subjective — or internal — including gut feelings, intuition, hunches — the way you know you love your children, for example, or experiences you have that cannot be explained or proven, but feel absolutely real nonetheless. This way of knowing is what is referred to as *noetic*.

From a purely materialist, mechanistic perspective, all subjective experiences— noetic experiences — arise from physical matter, and consciousness is simply a byproduct of brain and body processes. The noetic sciences focus on bringing a scientific lens to the study of subjective experience, and to ways that consciousness may influence the physical world. The data that has been collected so far has raised many provocative questions.

The essential hypothesis underlying the noetic sciences is, put simply, that consciousness matters. The question is when, how, and why does it matter.

² Institute of Noetic Sciences

Consciousness has been defined in many ways, but in the context I'm referring to, consciousness is awareness — how people perceive, interpret, and direct their attention and intention toward their environment. Collective consciousness is how a group (an institution, a society, a species) perceives, attends to, and makes meaning of the world. In its largest, most universal sense, consciousness has been referred to as “the shared ground of being” from which all experiences and phenomena arise and eventually return. An atmosphere of potential.

The Institute of Noetic Sciences sees noetic science as a growing field of valid inquiry. Every new discovery leads to more questions as the mystery of human consciousness slowly unfolds. In the areas of consciousness and healing, meditation, extended human capacities (such as psychic abilities), and a world view transformation. Even though their work isn't accepted in the general scientific community, they keep pushing the boundaries of what we know, advancing our shared understanding of consciousness and why it matters.

So what has all this to do with Freemasonry and the principles of Freemasonry?

Without getting into the science of infosomatics (“info” meaning information and “somatics” meaning body manifestation), consider the implication of the theories of noetic science coupled with the teachings of Freemasonry. If in fact thoughts can create change in our material world, then it stands to reason that collective thought, can promote even greater change. Is it possible that our collective thought could cause a transformation of our entire world if enough people are thinking along the same lines.

Freemasons have a set of basic principles that they all live by. Masonic lodge members promise never to bring anything offensive or defensive into the lodge with them — both weapons and words. The object of the lodge is to create a place where those divisions are left outside, so Masons can engage in activities that unite them instead of separating them. Consider the following in respect to Freemasonry:

- **A moral code:** Freemasons believe in honor and that a man has a responsibility to behave honorably in everything he does. Freemasonry teaches its members the principles of personal decency and personal responsibility. It hopes to inspire them to have charity and good will toward all mankind, and to translate principles and convictions into action.

- **Charity:** Freemasonry is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of all mankind. Freemasonry teaches its members that unselfishness is a duty and that it's not only more blessed to give than to receive, but also more rewarding.

- **Education:** Freemasonry teaches a system of morality and brotherhood by the use of symbols and dramatic presentations. It encourages its members to expand their knowledge of the world around them.³

In Scottish Rite, the 32nd Degree teaches us that the human spirit is a ray of the Divine Light and, further, since human reason is part of universal reason, then “man may have lofty aspirations and a high ambition, for he is capable of great things. His intellectual convictions are revelations.” If we can promote the principles of Freemasonry in our thoughts, then, according to Noetic Science, it is possible that we could, over time, remove all obstacles from the final triumph and victory of these Masonic principles as “the standard” in our world. Our collective thoughts could change the world around us. And, if as indicated in the 32nd Degree, our spirit is a ray of the Divine Light, then why would it be difficult to imagine our thoughts can change the world. Can you imagine living in a world where everyone came from a position of who best can work and best agree? A world where everyone, regardless of cult, sect, or opinion, could establish friendships? Where the universal benevolence of Freemasonry could become the universal benevolence of all?

I'm presenting this as food for thought. I hope it stimulates your thinking.

³“dummies” web site – The Basic Principles of Freemasons