

God's Knowledge & the "-isms"

Do absolute moral values exist? Or is everything relative? Do we base what we know on opinion? Or rationalism? Or realism? Or idealism? Or naturalism? Or empiricism? Or materialism and determinism? Or humanism? Or existentialism? Or pragmatism? Or relativism? Or whatever?

PHILOSOPHICAL DEFINITIONS (SIMPLIFIED AND ABBREVIATED)

Empiricism. The view that experience, especially of the senses, is the only source of knowledge. Employment of empirical methods, as in science. (Induction.) If I can't measure it with my senses, or extension of my physical senses, then it isn't real.

Existentialism. Individual uniqueness and isolation in a hostile or indifferent universe; human existence is unexplainable; freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. "All I know is that I exist, and therefore I decide what is truth to me."

Humanism. A system of thought that centers on human beings and their values, capacities, and worth. There is no God, only man exists as the greatest thing in the universe. Man can solve his own problems; there is no divine help.

Materialism. The theory that physical matter is the only reality and that everything, including thought, feeling, mind, and will, can be explained in terms of matter and physical phenomena. The theory or doctrine that physical well-being and worldly possessions constitute the greatest good and highest value in life. A great or excessive regard for worldly concerns.

Naturalism. The system of thought holding that all phenomena can be explained in terms of natural causes and laws without attributing moral, spiritual, or supernatural significance to them. Only the physical world is real. Everything about my personality can be chemically explained.

Pragmatism. The meaning [or truth or value] of an idea or a proposition lies in its observable practical consequences. If it works, then it is good.

Rationalism. The theory that the exercise of reason, rather than the acceptance of empiricism, authority, or spiritual revelation, provides the only valid basis for action or belief and that reason is the prime source of knowledge and of spiritual truth. (Deduction.)

Idealism. The theory that the object of external perception, in itself or as perceived, consists of ideas. The real world isn't real; it isn't here, it's some place else.

Realism. Universals exist independently of their being thought. Physical objects exist independently of their being perceived. This world is the real world, whether I perceive it or not.

Relativism. A theory that conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them. Do your own thing.

Can mankind solve our problems? Are the humanists correct? Are there answers for the world's problems? What and where are they?

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:5-10. Italics in original.

GOD HAS ALL POWER AND WISDOM. My grandfather, Hyrum Smith, at the conference of the Church, April, 1844, in the course of his remarks said: "I want to put down all false influence.... *I would not serve a God that had not all wisdom and all power.*"

...Who dares say that the quality of "virtue" is limited with our Heavenly Father and his Son? *Is their truthfulness only "relative"? Could they be more truthful? More honorable? More virtuous or loving?* How foolish such questions are, and how much more foolish would be the answer if we said: "Yes the Lord is limited in his truthfulness, honor, virtue."

Well, if he is absolute in these qualities, is he on the road of retrogression in them? According to the argument this must be so if the absolute is reached. Then why should we say that his knowledge is limited and that hidden law and truths abound which he has not discovered? Who made these laws and where do they come from?

GOD PROGRESSES BECAUSE OF KNOWLEDGE. It is not because the Lord is ignorant of law and truth that he is able to progress, but *because* of his knowledge and wisdom. The Lord is constantly using his knowledge in his work.... By the creation of worlds and peopling them, by building and extending, he progresses, but *not* because the fulness of truth is not understood by him.

Bruce R. McConkie, "Seven Deadly Heresies," BYU, 1 June 1980.

Heresy 1—There are those who say that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths. This is false — utterly, totally, and completely. There is not one sliver of truth in it. It grows out of a wholly twisted and incorrect view of the

King Follett Sermon and of what is meant by eternal progression. God progresses in the sense that his kingdoms increase and his dominions multiply — not in the sense that he learns new truths and discovers new laws.

God is not a student. He is not a laboratory technician. He is not postulating new theories on the basis of past experiences [inductive, scientific method]. He has indeed graduated to that state of exaltation that consists of knowing all things and having all power.

Harold B. Lee, BYU 18 July 1954.

There is no statement more destructive of faith than that God is a progressive God ... “It has been more generally believed that the saints will progress in knowledge to all eternity: But when they become one with the Father and Son, and receive a fulness of their glory, that will be the end of all progression in knowledge, because there will be nothing more to be learned. The Father and the Son do not progress in knowledge and wisdom, because they already know all things past, present, and to come...” (Orson Pratt, *The Seer* 1:117, vs. 96-98.)

God has reached perfection in knowledge. There is no great body of knowledge which God will never acquire.

Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, pp. 7–15. (Emphasis added.)

Below the scripture that declares that God “knows all things” there is no footnote reading “except that God is a little weak in geophysics”! **We do not worship a God who simply forecasts** [inductive method] a generally greater frequency of earthquakes in the last days before the second coming of His Son; He knows precisely when and where all these will occur. God has even prophesied that the Mount of Olives will cleave in twain at a precise latter-day time as Israel is besieged. (Zechariah 14:4.) ...

Mortals should not aspire to teach God that He is not omniscient by adding qualifiers that He has never used in the scriptures. Job rightly asked, “Shall any teach God knowledge?” (Job 21:22.)...

There is simply no way to reconcile the doctrine of the omniscience of God with the notion of a god who is something less than that.

Unfortunately, the omniscience of God in the minds of some well-meaning Latter-day Saints has been qualified by the concept of “eternal progression.” Some have wrongly assumed God’s progress is related to His acquisition of additional knowledge. In fact, God’s “eternal progression” (if one is nevertheless determined to apply these two words to God) is related to the successful execution, again and again, of His plan of salvation to redeem billions of His children throughout His many creations. President Brigham Young said there are “millions of earths” like this one. (*JD* 11:41.) Of this marvelous recurring and redemptive process that rolls forth on such a vast scale, God has said that “his course is one eternal round.” (D&C 3:2.) ...

Those who try to qualify God’s omniscience fail to understand that He has no need to avoid ennui [boredom] by learning new things. Because God’s love is also perfect, there is, in fact, divine delight in that “one eternal round” which, to us, seems to be all routine and repetition. God derives His great and continuing joy and glory by increasing and advancing His creations, and not from new intellectual experiences.

There is a vast difference, therefore, between an omniscient God and the false notion that God is on some sort of post-doctoral fellowship, still searching for additional key truths and vital data. Were the latter so, God might, at any moment, discover some new truth not previously known to Him that would restructure, diminish, or undercut certain truths previously known by Him. **Prophecy would be mere prediction.** Planning assumptions pertaining to our redemption would need to be revised. Fortunately for us, however, His plan of salvation is constantly underway—not constantly under revision.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 55-56.

We admit that God is the great source and fountain from whence proceeds all good; that He is perfect intelligence, and that His wisdom is alone sufficient to govern and regulate the mighty creations and worlds which shine and blaze with such magnificence and splendor over our heads, as though touched with His finger and moved by His Almighty word. And if so, it is done and regulated by law; for without law all must certainly fall into chaos. If, then, we admit that God is the source of all wisdom and understanding, we must admit that by His direct inspiration He has taught man that law is necessary in order to govern and regulate His own immediate interest and welfare; for this reason, that law is beneficial to promote peace and happiness among men. And as before remarked, God is the source from whence proceeds all good; and if man is benefited by law, then certainly, law is good; and if law is good, then law, or the principle of it, emanated from God; for God is the source of all good; consequently, then, He was the first Author of law, or the principle of it, to mankind.

Lamar E. Garrard, “Creation, Fall, & Atonement,” *Studies in Scripture: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, vol. 7, pg. 87ff.

The modern trend is to accept a “naturalistic” or “mechanistic” view of the origin of our solar system, including our earth and all things upon it. Such a view proposes that these things came into existence by chance — by the strict operation of “natural law” rather than by God’s purposes being fulfilled as a result of his wisdom and power.

This mechanistic view looks upon natural law as eternal or self-existent and as determining absolutely what happens to physical matter over a given time.... Such a view leaves no room for a God who has all knowledge and who thinks and plans (no divine purpose in the universe); for a sovereign God who is all powerful and who is the author of natural law (a God who has control or power directly over physical matter); or for miracles or divine intervention (God cannot change or revoke natural law)....

An offshoot of this naturalistic philosophy is advocated by some who say that there is a God but that there is also an eternal (self-existing) moral law in the universe that exists independent of God (*no* God at any time is the author of this law). Some even suggest that God became God by obeying such a law, which implies that the law is ultimately the sovereign power in the universe. In such a universe, it would be more reasonable for people to worship the law (which incidentally has no body, parts, or passions) since it is more powerful than God and he is subject to it...

Lehi's statement [2 Nephi 2:13] clearly indicates that moral laws in the universe do not exist independent of God: if there is no law, there is no God, and if there is no God, there is no law; for God is *always* the author of law.

Knowledge: Man's or God's?

Man's	God's
Man developed from simple organisms and has lived for millions of years. Evidence = fossils.	A prophet says that Adam was the first man, the son of God. Evidence = revelation, scriptures.
Guilt feelings should be dealt with by learning to live with your shortcomings.	Guilt originates because of sin. We deal with it through repentance.
A book told you one thing.	The scriptures told you another thing.