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Sacred and Profane Science

René Guénon

In civilizations possessing a traditional character intellectual intuition occupies the position of a principle to which everything else can be referred; in other words it is the purely metaphysical doctrine that constitutes the essential, everything else being linked to it in the form either of consequences or of applications to the various orders of contingent reality. This is especially true of social institutions; but it is also true of the sciences, of those branches of knowledge, that is to say, which are concerned with the sphere of the relative and can only be regarded, in such civilizations, as dependencies and, as it were, prolongations or reflections of absolute and principial knowledge.[1] It is in this manner that the proper hierarchy is everywhere and always preserved: the relative is not in any way treated as nonexistent, which would be senseless; it is duly taken into consideration, but it is placed in its proper posi-

1 *Editor's note:* "The whole existence of the peoples of antiquity, and of traditional peoples in general, is dominated by two presiding ideas, the idea of Center and the idea of Origin. In the spatial world we live in, every value is related back in one way or another to a sacred Center, to the place where Heaven has touched the earth; in every human world there is a place where God has manifested Himself to spread His grace therein. Similarly for the Origin, the quasi-timeless moment when Heaven was near and when terrestrial things were still half-celestial; but the Origin is also, in the case of civilizations having a historical founder, the time when God spoke, thereby renewing the primordial alliance for the branch of humanity concerned. To conform to tradition is to keep faith with the Origin, and for that very reason it is also to be situated at the Center; it is to dwell in the primordial Purity and in the universal Norm. Everything in the behavior of ancient and traditional peoples can be explained, directly or indirectly, by reference to these two ideas, which are like landmarks in the measureless and perilous world of forms and of change." Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (World Wisdom, Bloomington, 1984), p. 7.

tion, which cannot be other than a secondary and subordinate one; and within this sphere of the relative itself there are many different degrees, depending upon whether the subject under consideration lies closer to or farther away from the realm of principles.

Thus, as far as the sciences are concerned, there are two radically different and even incompatible conceptions, which may be referred to respectively as the traditional and the modern conceptions; we have often had occasion to allude to those "traditional sciences" which existed in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages and which still exist in the East today,[2] although the very notion of any such thing has become completely foreign to the Occidentals. It should be added that every civilization has possessed "traditional sciences" of a particular sort peculiar to itself, the reason being that where sciences are concerned one is no longer in the sphere of universal principles, which is the province of pure metaphysics alone, but in the realm of adaptations; in this realm, for the very reason that it is a contingent one, account has to be taken of the whole aggregate of conditions, mental and otherwise, which belong to any given people and one may even say, to any given period in the existence of a people, since there are periods when "readaptations" become necessary. These readaptations are no more than changes of form, not affecting the essence of the tradition in any way; as far as metaphysical doctrine is concerned only the expression can be modified, in a manner more or less comparable to translation from one language into another; though the forms may be various which it assumes for the sake of expressing itself, insofar as such expression is possible, metaphysics remains one, just as truth is but one.

When one passes, however, to the realm of applications the case is naturally altered: with the sciences, as with social institutions, one enters the world of form and multiplicity; it is on this account that differences of form may really be said to constitute different sciences, even when the object of study remains at least partially the

2 *Editor's note:* This article was first published in 1927. Since that time the trend that René Guénon so well described in his monumental work *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (Sophia Perennis, Ghent, New York, 2001), has continued towards the final stages of the Kali Yuga with the ensuing destruction of the traditional worlds and their respective cultural frameworks, including the traditional sciences and crafts. This element is analyzed in detail by Frithjof Schuon in his *The Eye of the Heart* (World Wisdom, Bloomington, 1997), Chapter 8.

same. Logicians are accustomed to regard a science as entirely defined by its object, but this is an over-simplified view; the standpoint from which the object is envisaged must also enter into the definition of a science. The number of possible sciences is indefinite; it can well happen that several sciences will study the same things, but under such different aspects and therefore by such different methods and with such different intentions, that they are nonetheless in reality quite distinct sciences. This is especially liable to happen with "traditional sciences" belonging to different civilizations; sciences, that is to say, which, although mutually comparable, nevertheless cannot always be assimilated to one another and often could not correctly be described by the same name. It goes without saying that the difference is still more marked if, instead of making a comparison between traditional sciences, which do at least all possess the same character fundamentally, one tries to compare these sciences in a general way with science as conceived by the modern world; at first sight it might sometimes appear that the object of study was the same in either case and yet the knowledge of it which the two kinds of science provide differs so widely that one hesitates, upon closer examination, to continue regarding them as the same, even in a partial sense.

A few examples may serve to make our meaning clearer; and to begin with we will take a very general one, namely that of "physics," as understood by the ancients and by the moderns respectively; in this case moreover it is not necessary to look beyond the western world in order to observe the profound difference separating the two conceptions. The term "physics" in its original and etymological sense meant nothing more nor less than the "science of nature" without qualification of any kind; it is therefore a science which deals with the most general laws of "becoming" ("nature" and "becoming" being synonymous fundamentally), and it was in this way that the Greeks, and notably Aristotle, understood this science; if more specialized sciences happen to exist relating to the same order, they can amount to no more than "specifications" of physics, dealing with some more narrowly defined sphere or other. Already therefore there is something rather significant about the deviation of meaning to which the moderns have subjected the word "physics" by reserving it exclusively to describe one particular science among many others, all of which are equally natural sciences; this fact is closely connected with that process of subdivision that we have

remarked upon as a characteristic of modern science, a form of "specialization" bred of the analytical frame of mind and carried to such lengths as to render the conception of a single science treating nature as one whole well-nigh inconceivable to anyone who has undergone its influence. The inconveniences resulting from this specialization, and above all the narrowness of outlook it engenders, have not passed altogether unnoticed; but it would seem that those very people who are most clearly aware of the fact have resigned themselves to it nevertheless as a necessary evil resulting from the vast accumulation of detailed knowledge which no one man could ever hope to grasp; on the one hand they have not understood that such detailed knowledge lacks significance in itself and is not worth the sacrifice of a synthetic knowledge belonging to a much higher order even though still dealing with the relative; and on the other hand they have failed to see that the impossibility of unifying the multiplicity of this detailed knowledge is a consequence of their own reluctance to relate it to a higher principle; it is due, that is to say, to a persistence in working from the bottom upwards and from externals, whereas the very opposite process is called for if one wishes to possess sciences endowed with real speculative value.[3]

If, instead of comparing the physics of the ancients with what the moderns understand by the term, one were to compare it with the whole aggregate of natural sciences as at present constituted—and that is what ought really to correspond to the ancient physics—the first point of difference to note would be the subdivision into "specialities" which are so to speak foreign to one another. This is however only the most external aspect of the question and it must not be supposed that by combining all these special sciences one

3 *Editor's note:* "In all this wish [of modern science] to accumulate knowledge of relative things, the metaphysical dimension—which alone takes us out of the vicious circle of the phenomenal and the absurd—is expressly put aside; it is as if a man were endowed with all possible faculties of perception minus intelligence; or again, it is as if one believed that an animal endowed with sight were more capable than a blind man of understanding the mysteries of the world. The science of our time knows how to measure galaxies and split atoms, but it is incapable of the least investigation beyond the sensible world, so much so that outside its self-imposed but unrecognized limits it remains more ignorant than the most rudimentary magic." Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (World Wisdom, Bloomington, 1993), p. 42.

would arrive at the equivalent of the ancient physics. The fact of the matter is that the point of view is completely alien and it is here that the essential difference arises between the two conceptions referred to above; the traditional conception, as we have already remarked, links all the sciences to the principles of which they become particular applications, and it is precisely this connection which the modern conception fails to admit. For Aristotle, physics came "second" in relation to metaphysics, it was dependent upon metaphysics that is to say, and was really only an application to the province of nature of principles which are superior to nature and are reflected in her laws; and the same can be said of mediaeval cosmology. The modern conception, on the other hand, claims to make the sciences independent by repudiating everything that transcends them, or at least by declaring it "unknowable" and refusing to take it into account, which amounts to ignoring it in practice; this negation existed as a fact for a long time before people thought of erecting it into a systematic theory under such names as "positivism" and "agnosticism," for it may truly be said to lie at the root of modern science as a whole. It is only in the nineteenth century however that one finds men glorying in their ignorance (since to call oneself an "agnostic" amounts to nothing else), and claiming to deny others all knowledge of the things they themselves are ignorant of, and that stage marked a further step in the intellectual decline of the West.

In seeking completely to sever the connection between the sciences and any higher principles, on the pretext of safeguarding their independence, the modern conception robs them of all deeper meaning and even of any real interest from the point of view of knowledge, and it can only lead them down a blind alley, imprisoning them, as it does, within an incurably limited realm.[4] Moreover the development which goes on inside that realm is not a

4 It should be noted that something similar has occurred in the social order, where the moderns claim to separate the temporal from the spiritual. It is not a question of denying the fact that the two are distinct, since they refer effectively to different realms, just as in the case of metaphysics and the sciences. What is overlooked, however, thanks to an inherent error of the analytical approach, is that distinction does not mean complete separation. In this way, the temporal power forfeits its legitimacy, and the same could be said of the sciences, in the intellectual order.

deepening of knowledge, as is commonly supposed; on the contrary, the information so gained remains superficial and consists merely in that dispersion in detail that we have already alluded to, in an analysis as barren as it is laborious and which can be pursued indefinitely without advancing a single step further in the direction of true knowledge. Furthermore it is not for its own sake that Westerners in general cultivate science as they understand it; their primary aim is not knowledge, even of an inferior order, but practical applications, as may be inferred from the ease with which the majority of our contemporaries confuse science and industry, so that by many the engineer is looked upon as a typical man of science; but this is connected with another question that we shall have to go into more fully later on.

In assuming its modern form science has not only lost in depth, but also, one might say, in solidity, since attachment to the principles enabled it to participate in their immutability to the full extent that the nature of its subject matter allowed; once shut off exclusively in the realm of change, however, it cannot hope to achieve any kind of stability, nor to find any solid basis on which to build; no longer starting out from any certainty, it finds itself reduced to probabilities and approximations, or to purely hypothetical constructions which are merely the product of individual fantasy. Furthermore, even if modern science accidentally happens to arrive, by a very roundabout route, at certain results which appear to agree with some of the data of the ancient traditional sciences, it would be the greatest mistake to look upon those results as confirming the data in question, which stand in no need of any such confirmation; and it would be a waste of time to try and reconcile such totally different points of view, or to establish a concordance with hypothetical theories which may be completely discredited in a few years time.[5] So far as modern science is concerned these conclusions cannot but partake of the nature of hypotheses, whereas they amounted to something quite different for the "traditional sciences," presenting themselves as the unquestionable consequences

5 The same observation applies, from the religious point of view, to a certain "apologetic" which claims to establish an agreement with the results of modern science, an utterly illusory task and one constantly needing to be started anew, involving the grave danger of appearing to bind up religion with changing and ephemeral conceptions of which it should remain totally independent.

of truths known intuitively, and therefore infallibly, within the metaphysical order.[6] Moreover it is a peculiar delusion, typical of modern "experimentalism," to suppose that a theory can be proved by facts, whereas really the same facts can always be equally well explained by a variety of different theories; and certain of the pioneers of the experimental method, such as Claude Bernard, have themselves recognized that they could interpret facts only with the help of "preconceived ideas," apart from which they would remain "bare facts," devoid of significance or scientific value.

While speaking of "experimentalism" the opportunity may be taken to reply to a question which is sometimes raised in this connection, and which is as follows: why have the experimental sciences received a development in the modern civilization such as they never received at the hands of any other civilization before? The reason is that they confine their attention to things of the senses and to the world of matter, and also that they lend themselves readily to the most immediate practical applications; their development, going hand in hand with what may well be termed the "superstition of facts," is thus quite in accordance with the specifically modern tendencies, whereas preceding ages would, on the contrary, have been unable to find sufficient inducements for becoming absorbed in this direction to the extent of neglecting the higher orders of knowledge. It should be clearly understood that, according to our view, there is no question of maintaining that any kind of knowledge, however inferior, is illegitimate in itself; what is not legitimate is simply the abuse which occurs when subjects of this kind absorb the whole of human activity, as is the case today. One might even conceive of a normal civilization where there were experimental sciences attached, like the other sciences, to the principles and thus provided with a real speculative value; in point of fact, if no such instance seems to have occurred, that is because attention was turned for preference in other directions, and also because, even when it was a question of studying the sensible world insofar as it might appear interesting to do so, traditional data

6 It would be easy to give examples of this: we will mention only, as being one of the most striking, the different nature of the conceptions of ether to be found in Hindu cosmology and in modern physics.

would have made it possible to undertake this study more advantageously by other methods and from a different point of view.

We remarked above that one of the characteristics of the present time is the exploitation of all those things that had hitherto been neglected as not possessing sufficient importance for men to devote their attention to them, but which nevertheless had also to be developed before the end of the present cycle, since they too have their place among the possibilities destined to be manifested therein; such in particular is the case of the experimental sciences which have come into existence during the course of recent centuries. There are even certain modern sciences which actually amount, in the most literal sense of the word to "residues" of ancient sciences that are no longer understood:[7] it is the most inferior elements of these latter sciences which, through being isolated and detached from all the rest during a period of decadence, became grossly materialized and then served as the starting point for quite a different development along lines conforming with modern tendencies, in such a way as to lead to the formation of sciences no longer having anything in common with those that had preceded them. Thus for instance it is incorrect to maintain, as is generally supposed, that astrology and alchemy have respectively become modern astronomy and chemistry, even though this view contains a certain degree of truth from the purely historical angle, just so much in fact as is apparent from what we have said above: if the latter sciences have indeed issued from the former in a certain sense, it is not as the result of "evolution" or "progress," as is commonly asserted, but, on the contrary, by a process of degeneration; and this is a point which calls for further explanation.

In the first place it should be noted that the attribution of a separate meaning to the terms "astrology" and "astronomy" is of relatively recent origin; among the Greeks both words were employed, without distinguishing between them, in order to denote the whole of the field now divided up between the two terms. It would seem then, at first sight, as if this were but another instance of that division introduced for the sake of "specialization" between what were

7 *Translator's note*: It is worthy of notice that the Tibetan name for the Kali Yuga is, literally, "the age of impure residues." Its final phase is likewise described as "the time when impurities grow more and more."

originally only parts of a single science; but what is peculiar in the present case is that, whereas one of the parts, that namely which represented the more material side of the science in question, underwent an independent development, the other part, on the contrary, disappeared altogether. So true is this that it is not even known any longer what ancient astrology amounted to, and even those who have attempted to reconstruct it never achieve more than a counterfeit of it; either they attempt to turn it into the equivalent of a modern experimental science and have recourse to statistics and the calculation of probabilities, in consequence of the adoption of a point of view that could not possibly have existed for either the ancient or the mediaeval worlds, or else they direct their attention exclusively to the restoration of an "art of divination" which amounted to no more than a perversion of astrology in its decline and which could be regarded at most as a very inferior application, scarcely worthy of serious consideration, as can still be observed in the attitude shown towards it in the East today.

The case of chemistry is perhaps even clearer and more typical; and, as regards the ignorance of the moderns about the true nature of alchemy, it is at least as great as in the case of astrology. Genuine alchemy was essentially a science belonging to the cosmological order, and at the same time it was also applicable to the human order, by virtue of the analogy between the "macrocosm" and the "microcosm"; furthermore, it was constituted particularly with a view to allowing of a transposition into the purely spiritual realm, which lent a symbolical value and a higher significance to its teaching, placing it among the most complete types of "traditional sciences." It is not from this alchemy, with which, as a matter of fact, it has nothing in common, that modern chemistry has sprung; modern chemistry is a corruption and, in the strictest sense of the word, a deviation having its origin, perhaps as early as the Middle Ages, in a lack of understanding on the part of persons who, from incapacity to penetrate the true meaning of the symbols used, took everything literally and launched out into a more or less confused experimentalism on the supposition that alchemy was purely and simply a question of material manipulations. These people, sarcastically referred to by the alchemists as "blowers" and "charcoal burners" were the real forerunners of the chemists of today; and this illustrates how modern science came to be built up from the remnants of ancient sciences, with materials which had been

rejected and abandoned to the ignorant and the "profane." Let it be added that the so-called restorers of alchemy, of whom there are a certain number to be found in the contemporary world, are for their part merely prolonging this very deviation, and their researches are as far removed from traditional alchemy as are those of present day astrologers from ancient astrology, and it is for this reason that one is justified in declaring that the "traditional sciences" of the West really are lost for the modern world.

We will confine ourselves to these few examples, although it would be an easy matter to supply a number of others chosen from various different spheres and revealing a similar degeneration everywhere. It could be shown in this way that psychology as understood today, the study, that is to say, of mental phenomena as such, is a natural product of Anglo-Saxon empiricism and of the attitude of mind of the eighteenth century, and that the point of view to which it corresponds was so secondary in the eyes of the ancients that, even if it had happened to be taken into consideration incidentally, it could under no circumstances have been erected into a special science; whatever of value may be contained in it was to be found transformed and assimilated, as far as they were concerned, in accordance with higher points of view. In quite a different sphere it might also be shown that modern mathematics represents no more than the outer crust, so to speak, or the exoteric side, of Pythagorean mathematics; the ancient conception of numbers has even become quite unintelligible to the moderns, since, in that case as well, the superior portion of the science, that which, along with its traditional character, gave it genuine intellectual value, has disappeared completely, and the case of mathematics is very similar to that of astrology. But to pass all the sciences in review, one after another, would be tedious; enough has been said to explain the nature of the change to which the modern sciences owe their birth and which is the very opposite of a "progress" amounting rather to a veritable regression of intelligence; and we will now return to questions of a general order concerning the parts played by "traditional" and modern sciences respectively and the profound differences which exist between them as to their true aims.

According to the traditional conception a science is interesting not so much for its own sake as for its being as it were a prolongation or secondary branch of the doctrine, of which the essential

part is constituted, as we have seen, by pure metaphysics.[8] Actually, if every science is certainly legitimate, so long as it does not overstep the position that properly belongs to it in virtue of its own nature, it will nevertheless be easily understood that, for anyone possessing knowledge of a higher order, the lower forms of knowledge inevitably lose a great deal of their interest; whatever interest they do retain will only be as a function, so to speak, of the principial knowledge, that is to say insofar as, on the one hand, they reflect this knowledge in such and such a contingent sphere, or, on the other hand, insofar as they are capable of leading up to that same principial knowledge, which, in such a case, must never be lost sight of or sacrificed to more or less accidental considerations. These are the two complementary functions that properly belong to the "traditional sciences": on the one hand, as applications of the doctrine, they allow of linking up all the different orders of reality one to another and of integrating them in the unity of the total synthesis; on the other hand, they constitute, for some people at least, and in accordance with their own particular aptitudes, a preparation for a higher type of knowledge and a kind of pathway leading towards it, while from their hierarchical arrangement, according to the levels of existence to which they relate, they form as it were so many rungs of a ladder with the aid of which it is possible to raise oneself to the heights of pure intellectuality.[9] It is only too easy to see that the modern sciences cannot in any way fulfill either the one or the other of these twin purposes; it is for this reason that they cannot amount to anything but "profane science," whereas the traditional sciences, owing to their link with the metaphysical principles, are effectively incorporated in "sacred science."

The twofold purpose that we have just pointed out does not moreover imply either a contradiction or a vicious circle, though

8 This is expressed, for example, in a title such as *upaveda*, used in India for certain traditional sciences and showing their subordination to the *Veda*, that is to say to sacred knowledge.

9 In our study, *L'Esotérisme de Dante* (The Esoterism of Dante [New York: Sophia Perennis et Universalis, 1996]. Ed.), we spoke of the symbolism of the ladder, the rungs of which correspond, in various traditions, to certain sciences and, at the same time, to states of the being; this necessarily implies that these sciences were not regarded in a merely "profane" manner, as in the modern world, but allowed of a transposition which bestowed on them a real initiatory significance.

superficially it might appear to do so; and this is also a point that requires explaining. It might be described as a question of two points of view, the one descending and the other ascending, or the one corresponding to an unfolding of knowledge, starting from the principles and proceeding towards ever more distant applications, and the other corresponding to a gradual acquisition of that same knowledge, proceeding from the lower to the higher, or, if preferred, from the outer to the inner. It is not therefore a matter of knowing whether the sciences ought to be constituted from below upwards or from above downwards, or whether it is necessary for their existence to take cognizance of principles or of the sensible world as their starting point; this question, which may arise from the standpoint of "profane" philosophy and seems indeed to have arisen more or less explicitly among the Greeks, does not exist at all for "sacred science" which cannot start out from anything except the universal principles; the reason why such a question does not apply in this case is that the prime factor here is intellectual intuition, which is the most direct of all forms of knowledge as well as the highest, and is absolutely independent of the exercise of any faculty belonging to the sensible or even to the rational order. Sciences can only be validly constituted as "sacred sciences" by those who, above all else, are in full possession of principial knowledge and who alone are qualified, on that very account, to carry out, in conformity with the strictest traditional orthodoxy, all the various adaptations necessitated by circumstances of time and place. Once the sciences have been constituted in this manner, however, the teaching of them may follow an inverse order; they will serve as "illustrations" of the pure doctrine, so to speak, which they are able to render more easily accessible to certain types of mind; and from the fact that they deal with the world of multiplicity they are adapted, through the almost indefinite variety of their points of view, to the equally wide variety of individual aptitudes found among those types of mind whose horizon is still confined to that same world of multiplicity; the possible paths leading to knowledge may be extremely varied at the lowest levels, but they will converge more and more as the higher degrees are reached. This does not mean to say that any of these preparatory degrees are absolutely necessary, since they amount to no more than contingent means and enjoy no common measure with the goal to be attained; it can

even happen that some among those in whom the tendency to contemplation predominates will arrive in a single leap at true intellectual intuition without the aid of any such means;[10] but these are more or less exceptional cases and for the generality of men it is a matter of convenience, if one may so put it, amounting to a practical necessity, that they should proceed upwards by gradual stages. To make the point clearer one can also make use of the traditional symbol of the "cosmic wheel": the circumference only exists really in virtue of the center; but the beings who find themselves at the circumference must necessarily start out from there and follow the radius in order to reach the center. Furthermore, as a result of the correspondence that exists between every order of reality, truths belonging to a lower order can be taken as symbolical of those belonging to a higher order, and thus act as "supports" for arriving at a knowledge of the latter by the use of analogy; this it is which endows a science with a superior or "anagogical" meaning deeper than that which it possesses in itself, and bestows upon it the character of a genuine "sacred science."[11]

Every science, be it said, is capable of assuming this character, whatever its subject matter, on the sole condition of being set up and envisaged according to the traditional spirit; it is merely necessary to bear in mind the degrees of importance of the different sciences, depending upon the hierarchical position of the various orders of reality dealt with; but, whatever the degree, their character and their function remain essentially the same in the traditional conception. What is true of all the sciences in this respect is equally true of every art, inasmuch as an art can possess a genuinely symbolical value which enables it to serve as a support for meditation, and also because its rules like the laws which it is the object of science to understand, are in their turn reflections and applications of the fundamental principles; and thus it is that in every normal

10 This is why, according to the Hindu doctrine, the *Brâhmans* should keep their minds constantly turned towards the supreme knowledge, whereas the *Kshatriyas* should rather apply themselves to a study of the successive stages by which this is gradually to be reached.

11 This is the purpose, for instance, of the astronomical symbolism so commonly used in the various traditional doctrines; and what we say here can serve to give an idea of the true nature of ancient astrology.

civilization there are "traditional arts" which are no less lost to the modern West than the traditional sciences.[12] The truth is that there is really no such thing as a "profane realm" opposable in some way to a "sacred realm"; there is simply a "profane point of view" which is really nothing but the point of view of ignorance.[13] It is for this reason that profane science, as understood by the moderns that is to say, can fairly be described as "ignorant knowledge" as we have already remarked elsewhere: it is knowledge of an inferior order, remaining at the level of the lowest degree of reality and blind to everything that transcends it or to any aims loftier than its own, as well as to any principle capable of assuring it a legitimate place, however humble, among the various orders of knowledge as a whole; imprisoned irremediably within the relative and narrow field in which it has striven to proclaim itself independent, thereby of its own accord severing all connection with transcendent truth and supreme knowledge, it amounts to no more than an aimless and illusory form of knowledge, issuing out of nothing and leading nowhere.

This survey should suffice to make plain the deficiency of the modern world from a scientific standpoint and to show how that same science in which it takes such pride represents no more than a deviation and, as it were, a remnant of true science, which, in our eyes, can only be synonymous with what we have called "sacred" or "traditional" science. Modern science, arising out of an arbitrary limitation of knowledge within a certain particular order which is indeed the most inferior of all, namely that of material or sensible reality, has as a consequence forfeited all intellectual value, so long that is to say as one uses the word intellectuality in all the fullness of its true meaning and refuses to participate in the "rationalist" error, or to reject intellectual intuition, which amounts to the same thing. The source of this error as of a great many other modern errors,

12 The art of the mediaeval builders can be quoted as a particularly remarkable example of these traditional arts, whose practice, moreover, implied a real knowledge of the corresponding sciences.

13 To see the truth of this, it is sufficient to note facts such as the following: cosmogony, one of the most sacred of the sciences, a science which has its place in all the inspired books, including the Hebrew Bible, has become for the modern world a subject for completely "profane" hypotheses; the domain of the science is the same in both cases, but the point of view is utterly different.

and likewise the root of the entire deviation of science as outlined above, can be discovered in what may be called "individualism" an attitude of mind which is indistinguishable from the anti-traditional attitude itself and of which the numerous manifestations, apparent in every sphere, constitute one of the most important factors in the confusion of our time.[14]

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14 *Editor's note:* "A science that penetrates the depths of the 'infinitely great' and of the 'infinitely small' on the physical plane, but denies other planes although it is they that reveal the sufficient reason of the nature we perceive and provide the key to it, such a science is a greater evil than ignorance pure and simple; it is in fact a 'counter-science,' and its ultimate effects cannot but be deadly. In other words, modern science is a totalitarian rationalism that eliminates both Revelation and Intellect, and at the same time a totalitarian materialism that is blind to the metaphysical relativity—and therewith also the impermanence—of the world. It does not know that the suprasensible, situated as it is beyond space and time, is the concrete principle of the world, and that it is consequently also the origin of that contingent and changeable coagulation that we call 'matter.' A science that is called 'exact' is in fact an 'intelligence without wisdom,' just as post-Scholastic philosophy is inversely a 'wisdom without intelligence'." Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (World Wisdom, Bloomington, Indiana, 1984), pp. 116-117.