

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

EPISODE 6 / THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

Francis A. Schaeffer • Study & Discussion Handout

Purpose: Use these notes while watching Episode 6 or reading the chapter on the Scientific Age. Listen for Schaeffer's distinction between science as the study of God's orderly creation and scientism as a worldview that treats the material universe as all that exists.

Five Points to Watch For

1. **Modern science grew from belief in an orderly, knowable creation.** Schaeffer argues that early modern scientists expected nature to be intelligible because a rational God created and sustains it. Scientific investigation was therefore understood as the study of a real world made by God.
2. **Science and scientism are not the same thing.** Science investigates the natural world through observation, measurement, and experiment. Scientism goes further by claiming that scientific methods provide the only genuine knowledge and that material reality is all that exists.
3. **The decisive shift was from an open universe to a closed system.** Schaeffer distinguishes regular natural causes operating in a world open to God from the belief that the universe is a self-contained machine. In a closed system, God, purpose, and final meaning are excluded before the evidence is considered.
4. **A purely material account struggles to preserve human significance.** If people are only products of impersonal matter and chance, Schaeffer asks how freedom, love, moral responsibility, dignity, and rational thought can remain more than useful feelings or biological effects.
5. **Scientific power needs moral direction.** Science and technology can describe what can be done, but they cannot by themselves determine what ought to be done. The greater our technical power becomes, the more urgently we need an adequate foundation for ethics and human value.

Five Questions for Reflection

6. **Why did a biblical worldview encourage the rise of modern science?** How do creation, order, and the reliability of the human mind support careful investigation of nature?

7. **Where is the boundary between science and scientism?** When does a scientific conclusion become a philosophical claim about everything that can exist or be known?

8. **What changes when the universe is treated as a closed system?** What happens to purpose, providence, miracles, prayer, freedom, and moral responsibility?

9. **Can materialism adequately explain the whole human person?** Which features of human life—reason, consciousness, love, creativity, morality, or dignity—are hardest to reduce to impersonal processes?

10. **How should Christians respond to scientific and technological power?** How can we welcome truthful discovery while asking the moral questions that scientific methods alone cannot answer?

Scripture to Keep in Mind

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

— Psalm 19:1

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

— Colossians 1:16–17

AS YOU WATCH OR READ

Pay attention not simply to scientific discoveries, but to the worldview placed around them. Schaeffer’s larger question is: When science is turned into a closed, materialistic explanation of all reality, can it still account for the reason, freedom, morality, dignity, and meaning of the people doing the science?