

## Cat. 2 # 4 21st century thinking and believing and expecting. The self-imposed limitation of modern science confronted with an unlimited God

By Pieter Bos

My life's motto is from David (Psalm 63:1): "God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you". After a life of so many challenges and miracles, David knows who his God is and, he therefore, still earnestly seeks him! He seeks God, because he found Him.

*God, you are my God; earnestly and scientifically I seek you,*

### § 1 A city planner confronted with the "more than" question

I was trained as an architect and practiced as a city planning consultant in the Netherlands and as government expert urban renewal in Singapore. This nice career jump started straight after my graduation in 1968, the time of the emergence of econometric models. Immediately I was confronted with a fierce professional debate on the "more than question": am I more than a cog in a machine? Is societal life, urban growth, environmental quality, more than a mathematical model, and what about the imponderables? One reason why this discussion became heated was because it seemed to many in the profession that modern science had faced its limits. The planning paradigm, based on science, produced cities not in harmony either with nature or with man himself, and had to be questioned! I found myself guest lecturer and conference speaker on the philosophy of planning, comparing planning models based on a materialistic world view with models based on a transcendental and a biblical one. Doing so I found myself putting into words questions such as "how do the mathematical and the existential meet, what is the balance between thinking and believing?"

During the same time, as environmental activist, I found many of my fellow warriors jealous of me. They were as motivated as I was, but "You have such a clear philosophy (bible-based, which was not their way of thinking, but still; they had no basis except their inner motivation)".

In the eighties, after 14 years of a fruitful international professional career, I left the profession and soon became an international bible teacher with the focus on the functioning of cities and nations in God's perspective. My understanding of nations will transpire in this article and is summarised in my book "The Nations Called, theology of the nations and their redemption", available in four languages. (I take "nations" as a generic for tribe ->kinship network-, people ->cultural network- and state ->political and legal network).

In the following, building on both my professional career and my ministry career, I will explore the theme of the scientific approach to thinking and believing in the 21st century.

[As a remnant of my former profession I still do garden design; I love it.]

### §2 The self-imposed limitation of modern science

The above mentioned cluster of 'more than'-questions has a long history. Early science was expected to honour God in seeking knowledge, in one "unified field of knowledge" (Francis Schaefer). In the, heated, philosophic discussion between Pascal and Descartes, Pascal's position was that there are three sources of knowledge: experience, mind and heart; Descartes posed that there is only one source of knowledge: the mind. Through the era of the Enlightenment, the world view was reduced; reality was defined by just the observable, the seen, and science slowly shifted towards the position of Descartes: rationality grew into rationalism: the super-rational was gradually pushed out of science. The choice for the mind as the only viable source of knowledge excludes the things that can be discovered by experience and heart. That means that the super-rational, that used to be part of scientific research, concepts like God, values and destiny, was gradually pushed out and deemed unscientific. **Modern science limits itself to the rational**, everything else is defined as belonging to man's personal belief and as such of no scientific interest.

This definition of science works well to understand the awesomeness of visible reality, to separate "the seen" from "the unseen", and to unmask superstitions about the seen. This also works well for the application of science in technology. However, it causes major scientific and professional discussions on topics touching the "more than question", the "beyond rational", the imponderables, and the questions I touched upon as a professional.

**It must be clear that this limitation to the rational is a self-imposed limitation.** This limitation divorces thinking from believing, and in the end also action from creativity (resulting in much of "modern art"). And this is not a gain

but a loss. It is a loss, because no person, at the core of his being, stops believing something, every person wants something to respond to him, every person fights the despair of being alone in the universe, but is in this way blocked from taking that desire seriously... because it is deemed unscientific! Indeed, some philosophers state that true humanness is to face the desperate loneliness of man, (Bertrand Russell), thus definitively closing heaven. But super-rationality is man's way to understand himself in the section of reality which is beyond understanding. He must respond in this area, simply because he is humble enough to admit that what he does not understand is not therefore not-existing. Not understanding God does not allow man to deny him; not understanding all of experience and all of the heart does not allow him to deny them as sources of knowledge; not understanding destiny or suffering does not allow man to deny them as relevant concepts of reality. **Carving the super-rational out of reality is silencing sources of knowledge;** science will be less scientific without super-rationality. "Pure" social science, like econometrics in my professional time, constantly hides the presuppositions referring to human life, and so pushes towards a "man-made" society, man-made, but un-human. During the last century in philosophy of science the concept of "paradigm" was developed (Thomas Kuhn). This is the set of axioms in a scientific field that is foundational for scientific research in that field. Sudden discoveries may lead, and did lead, not without much discussion, to renewed axioms: a paradigm shift! Honest questioning of our paradigms is a scientific necessity. Kuhn's approach (and that of Karl Popper and Ludwig von Wittgenstein also) were in fact attempts to break out of the limitation to the rational in science. As it is now, science produces ever more "pieces of information" but very little "pattern of understanding", leaving that essential element for modern man to solve on his own (for obvious reasons not trusting the church in this respect). The core question emerged: shouldn't there be a shift in man's way of planning society, and even in the scientific method, because of the obvious conflict between man's way of perceiving his life and the limitations imposed by science to organize his life? My answer was yes *and I present* a proposal in Ch. 4.

### §3 Modern science and world view

Through the limitation to the rational, science can no longer discern between on the one hand the super-rational, which is relevant, though difficult, and on the other hand the irrational, which is inconsistent, confusing and difficult to handle. So on the one hand the rationalist is tempted to think he is disproving God and the super-rational; on the other hand the believer is judged to be irrational. Modern science suppresses religious world views.

But man thinks/believes in a certain way: In times of stability man does not ask too many questions and dwells in technology. In shaky times new world views and philosophies may emerge. And in times of disaster man tends to become religious. It turns out that, after all, the super-rational is never very far away. Modern science cannot prevent people having a world view. However, to clear the way to accepting the super-rational as relevant, we must not be led by insecurity or fear, but by consistent thinking-and-believing.

With the "more than question" unanswered, and eventually God out of sight, the individual is left alone with the questions asked intuitively, because he or she "knows" (with the heart) that rationality does not explain the whole scope of human life. He or she remains wondering about some or all seven of these core human questions: – who am I? – what is right or wrong? – where am I going? – where does creativity come from? – what is the core of sex? – and of heart-relationships? – and where/who is god/God? Modern man cries out for world view.

By limiting science to the rational, thinking is divorced from believing and expecting. Still, science today is both trying to solve the challenges of the future and is at the same time expected to actually do so by society. In this way, by the backdoor, science is treated like a political/religious source, and so becomes a new – "take away" – religion! Modern science evokes world view.

Historically "culture" meant the storage of all achievements in a unified field of knowledge. In our time culture has shrivelled to the soft side of life; considering the super-rational is now thought non-scientific, below scientific standards. Even theology is turning from speaking-about-the-living-God into comparative-religious-sciences. At the same time, we allow science to provide absolutes and to redefine all previous achievements. This, again, is in fact acting religious. Modern science messes with world view.

With core human questions unanswered, even denied, the resulting world view is pessimistic in scope and alienating in nature. How can we discover and incorporate a broader view, and still be 'scientific', or at least be communicating among scientists and between scientists and opinion makers? The breakdown in communication is disheartening. The limitation to the rational has suppressed the discussion of world view issues.

With thus the invisible separated from the visible, the spiritual divorced from the natural, strange phenomena find

their way in this very gap; mysticisms creep in, superstitions seem reasonable, nationalisms are defended, folklore can root, occult practices can settle, permissiveness develops, and most of all: new societal systems arise. (The concept of Intelligent Design is not a way out. This concept is only a last resource, even a scientific necessity for the many unsolved questions and contradictions in evolution theory.)

As the most quoted architecture historian of the last century, Giedion, exclaimed: “No city planning without a consistent outlook on the world”.

#### §4 Breaking through the sound barrier of the rational

Philosophy of science investigates the limits of science, in practice the limits of the rational. Kuhn’s efforts to break out of the self-imposed limitation were just the first attempts. As long as science submits to the self-imposed limitation to the rational, it cannot discover anything, or any One, beyond the rational, like meaning or destiny, origin or Originator.

**How to break through this “sound barrier of the rational”?** This touches the core of this article: How are we to break out of the self-imposed limitation to the rational?

The key to this dilemma is this: agreeing with Pascal that not only the mind but also experience and the heart are sources of knowledge; we should take phenomena that we experience or that we “know intuitively”, through the heart, seriously and we should develop a routine of examining these.

Therefore I offer the following daring proposal:

Let us assume two paradigms. **Paradigm 1:** reality, as perceived through the mind, through experience and through the heart, both the known and the unknown, the seen and unseen, is one reality. **Paradigm 2:** reality is not chaotic but consistent and can be researched in a “unified field of knowledge”, a field where the seen and the unseen, the claims about God, and the claims about the (macro- and micro-) universe, are tested for consistency. The second paradigm, that reality is consistent, has been proven workable in the history of science up until now, even though the historic paradigm shifts in several fields of science. The first paradigm is as old as Pascal but not therefore outdated.

A scientific routine could develop in which not only the hypothesis would be tested for verification, according to the old routine, but hypothesis, faith, revelation and miracle would all be tested for verification. I use these terms as follows: **1 hypothesis**, is the reaching from the known into the unknown, valid until proven wrong; a well tried tool in science; **2 faith**, is also a reaching from the known into the unknown, like the many axioms in use already, not (yet) proven, but under the demand of being consistent; **3 revelation**, is the experiencing of information out of the unknown and must be under the scrutiny of consistency; and **4 miracle**, is the experiencing of information out of the unknown that is not yet consistent with the known but consistently enlarges the understanding of the unknown. In other words: super-rationality is embraced, but irrationality is blocked out through the demand of consistency.

As regards to miracles I am not primarily thinking of miraculous healings or walking on water, but of the discovery of new paradigms that made Einstein and Bohr debate for a long time, or of the pioneering of new ways in art and architecture, “revelations”, that managed to change the world.

It is important to note that a scientist can only rationally admit a miracle when he can compare the situation before and after, like in case of a well-researched healing or in the case of “missing links” in organic evolution. But he cannot see a miracle when the situation before is unknown, as in the case of the creation of the universe. The scientist, whether he limits himself to the rational or not, does not want to see miracles, because he wants to understand, to fathom; admitting a miracle equals admitting the extra-ordinary, the super-rational. The wise Solomon stated emphatically (Proverbs chapter 8): wisdom starts and finishes not from human knowledge but by recognising God as the source of knowledge. Somehow nr. 3, revelation, is the basis for science.

Yes indeed! The very fact that revelation and miracle come from the unseen, makes verification-by-mind-through-repeatable-experiment impossible. But “in the beginning God created” first heaven and then the earth, i.e. the unseen first and the seen later. In other words: the conviction that something must be so, is by faith, just like the acceptance of the many axioms in science is frequently intuitive – it just must be so. The conviction is the verification! Or, as the author of Hebrews states: Faith is being certain, is ‘the proof’, of what we do not see (11:1). It has a necessary and additional value to the knowledge process, which enables both individuals and a whole society to grasp and receive new knowledge.

During my professional years, being confronted with a fierce professional debate on the “more than question”, I found myself pioneering with 1, 2 and 3 in a very fruitful way, developing “models of the unseen”, “seeking God in

my specific field of knowledge”, and soon found myself a quest lecturer and conference speaker on the philosophy of planning for professional audiences. Later more of 3 and even of 4 came into view, when I was studying the dynamics of cities and nations. I found the seen and the unseen consistently one reality; I found we can break out of the self-imposed limitation, break through the “sound barrier of the rational”, if only the scientist makes one condition: these four: hypotheses, faith, revelation and miracle, should be consistent! Only in that way does faith not become irrational or contradict modern science but enlarges the scope of it.

## §5 Thinking and believing and expecting

With “believing” inevitably also “expecting” comes into view.

When rationalism became the rule, science took on the aura of a world view. The ‘scientific’ world view meant the end of believing in the “beyond”. The outcome was that faith and politics, however different, grew separate from science. As a result, many political philosophies could develop, unrestrained by scientific scrutiny (Marx’ “scientific socialism” was an effort, as was the cultural pessimism of Camus and Russell). Political philosophies, societal systems, or world views or religions, old and new ones, aspire to validity by providing their sets of answers to the questions that typically reach beyond the rational, especially these **five core issues**: - who are we? – what is right or wrong? – where are we going? – how do scientific knowledge and faith knowledge meet? – what is the meaning of suffering?

Each societal system utilizes these four tools, hypothesis, faith, revelation and miracle, in various ways, in order to validate its visions, its set of answers to these core issues. A scientific attitude requires that none of these questions are ignored and that possible answers are consistent. Groping for answers is like dancing around the sound barrier of the rational. Religious “certainty”, in whatever field of society, that refuses to wait for consistency, and refuses to be questioned, produces fundamentalism and hypocrisy.

Now, researching how societal systems deal with the above five core issues concerning “the beyond”, we make a surprising discovery. Most societal systems, or world views or religions, old and new ones, however differently they deal with these issues, with more or less emphasis on consistency, all expect, envision, believe, assume, project a specific and guaranteed “good future” with, again surprisingly, a kind of oneworld-government. Look at this listing:

- Jews and -Christians expect a (1000 year) international realm of peace under the Messiah;
- the Nazis expected a 1000 year rule;
- the communists expect a classless society;
- the Illuminati work towards a oneworld-government under Lucifer;
- the Buddhists build the Shamballah rule, through the Dalai lama and his lama’s performing hundreds of kalachakra rituals over the whole world;
- Islam expects, and fights for, an Islam world rule (under a mahdi);
- New Agers expect a new world order with a new kind of humanity;
- the eco-utopists fight for the survival of Mother Earth, Gaia (by now they don’t need to be jealous of me any longer; “gaiasophy” is now well accepted);
- the UN at several stages has offered to become the oneworld-government, in order to grant “a better world for all”.

Each of these ten societal systems has a specific set of answers to these five core issues, or has a reason to deny certain issues as relevant. But all ten systems answer the where-do-we-go-question by envisioning a kind of oneworld-government. As said above, this is absolutely surprising! These are examples of “the beyond” being allowed to shape whole societies and even world politics, to the point of discrimination, not seldom even to the point of bloodshed.

At the same time, it is very consistent with the revelation that God will finish world history with a 1000-year Realm of Peace. The hypotheses and faiths and expected miracles in other societal systems seem somehow inspired by God, though distorted by man.

Because science could become like a religion through the rule of rationalism, many authors foresee, besides the above list, the increase of a global totalitarian technocracy. It is being preached and already developing. A bit more scientifically, author Francis Fukuyama foresees parliamentary democracy as the definite stage of history. He is opposed by historian Samuel Huntington who foresees a clash of civilisations. In other words: these two world renowned thinkers of our time (re)present either what many would like (super-rationally) or what many fear (super-rationally).

My entry into the theme of scientific approach of thinking and believing in the 21st century was through the field of city planning. In those years I was so often surprised that the theme of “total planning” of the whole of society, not just the layout of a city, was always around the corner, however inconsistent internally. I understand now. Thinking, believing, expecting, planning tends to be, by their very nature, macro-comprehensive, all-inclusive.

#### **§6 Separation of “church” and state? Institution versus movement**

From the experiences of a city planner we moved on to the discovery of the self-imposed limitation of knowledge to the rational, and then progressed to exploring ways to break out of that limitation. Only to arrive at clashing world views with wars around the corner. This helps us to understand the fierceness of the debate about the separation of church and state.

Indeed, church and state as organised institutions should be clearly separate, because they are philosophically different entities and because society has become multi-religious. But Ghandi said: “Anyone who wants to separate faith from politics has not understood either”. The above list illustrates that. The institutions should be separate indeed; the movements or world views or religions or political philosophies, feeding these and other institutions, have their own life and clash and rise and fall as movements do, often with a minimum of institutional organisation. In its first 300 years, Christianity was just a very strong movement of Christians practicing their values in society. This movement gained great momentum, as “the salt of the earth”. This came abruptly to an end when Emperor Constantine institutionalised Christianity and turned it into a state-church.

Nazism and communism in their institutionalised and militant expressions have lost. Islam utilises all the strengths of a movement when it is in the minority and starts institutionalisation through sharia rule when it gains a majority, and so becomes a threat to the 21st century world. New Age as a movement has spread widely at world level in many types of new religiosity and (UN-supported) giasophy.

In the 21st century, technology determines all aspects of life more and more strongly, and the rationalist world view becomes more and more oppressive, more and more institutionalised in bureaucracy and technocracy, In the meantime there is much action crossing over to the super-rational, not only privately but also publicly and corporately: by certain tribes through sun dancing, by Islam through intimidation, by New Age through lawlessness, by eco-utopists through pushing their truths, by the UN through imposing legislation and covenants, by Buddhism through rituals, by Christians through mercy ministry, prayer and prophecy.

Thinking and believing are growing aggressively apart while at the same time pessimism, escapism, political religiosity and political activism are on the increase. This development will inevitably lead to a climax of new tribalism, religious wars, discrimination, ecological threats, a third world war, apocalypse, doom scenario's, new world orders...

The powers, both through science and through beliefs, are enormously strong, for good or for evil. Keeping them separate out of fear will not prevent their operation. Whether separate or working together, they will make or break the world.

#### **§7 Thinking and believing in the 21st century**

In the western world the separation of “church” and state has become so rigid that even historical or traditional hints are considered violations of the principle (wrongly so). What is taking place in the second and third world in this respect is treated with disdain by western media, with their pride of being “advanced”. But it does take place. Let me mention a range of facts where politics and faith, Christian faith to be precise, meet, all at nation level. Each example is a way of “dancing around the sound barrier of the rational” and seems to have “a supernatural touch”. The powers are enormously strong... for good.

Here we go.

In the last 60 years we have seen Israel re-staged, at times in spectacular ways. For such a small country the oppression from outside and the scrutiny of the world have been disproportionate. Despite all irritation we must ask ourselves: is this a supernatural touch?

In the last 15 years no less than 10 states have covenanted/dedicated themselves at government level to God, including Zambia, Benin, Vanuatu and Sierra Leone. In the cases of Zambia and Vanuatu the next president turned to personal faith in Christ and then confirmed the national covenants. Against all instincts of western sophistication, we must ask ourselves: is this a supernatural touch?

No fewer than 100 cities in Brazil (In 2014 it were over 300) dedicated themselves at government level to Jesus, including Diadema, Sao Luis, Cuiabá and Cornelio Procopio. In Diadema in fact the crime rate dropped so

dramatically and consistently over the years, that the national government ordered an investigation in order that the whole nation could learn from that city. They found it true, but not easily reproducible. The New York magazine Newsweek featured: "Diadema, from hell to paradise". Against all western sophistication we must ask ourselves: is this a supernatural touch?

No fewer than 120 villages and islands in Fiji covenanted to God. In several villages, the day after confession of village-sins and covenanting the village to God, ecological healing of the land manifested clearly. A supernatural touch?

One European example: in 1988 and 1994 the Portuguese government publicly confessed the historical sins of persecution of Jews around 1492, and after decades of economic and political instability a clear turn of events was recorded. A supernatural touch?

These are facts; this is 21st century history! Whether these are supernatural touches or not is an open question. But when these facts (experiences) are taken seriously, and revelation and miracles also, we can expect a clear answer.

Each of these nations, cities and villages "sought God, to perhaps reach out for him and find him", as the apostle Paul taught the intellectual elite of Athens (Acts 17:27). Each of these nations, cities and villages made thinking and believing connect. This again is 21st century history.

The dedication of Tibet and Nepal to Buddhism, of Haiti to Satan, and the choice of sharia rule in Islamic nations, connect the religious and the political also. Are the extreme poverty, the heart-rending bondage to the occult, the aggressive oppression of women in these places also supernatural touches, but in the negative?

Thinking and believing in the 21st century. Thinking and believing were never meant to be contradictory but complementary. Both the philosophy of science and praying to God are exercises around the sound barrier of the rational. "Exercise your faith" is an expression the apostle Paul uses, knowing quite well that faith and rationality are easily competing, both for confessing believers and for confessing atheists and agnostics.

Religions and philosophies can certainly be contradictory, and exclusivisms of all sorts are around the corner, from discrimination in the scientific world to a "clash of civilisations" in the political world. In the long run a oneworld-government might seem to be the solution. Will it be an oppressive one, along the lines visible in the above? Or are the examples mentioned in this paragraph exercises around the sound barrier, with supernatural touches, pilot projects of the expected Realm of Peace?

Not only individuals in private but also nations as corporate bodies, should employ their minds, and connect them with their experience and their hearts, to move towards their future, insisting on consistency in all areas.

Several times during my professional career I produced designs and articles based on both scientific hypothesis and faith. During my national and international ministry career I pioneered ways of understanding spiritual dynamics and acting on them, including reconciliation and transformation of nations. All this was based on hypothesis, faith, revelation and miracle, intuitively groping for comprehensiveness. My testimony is that God showed himself alive, inspiring and leading us, and confirming his care for society.

Revelation and miracle cannot be grasped by the mind but **have to be revealed by people living it**. This is what the church is called to do, what the church AD 30-300 convincingly did, and what pilot projects do, such as are happening in Brazil. They embody a "revelation", something no one has ever seen before, and perform/present a "miracle", something no one has ever done before.