

THE ROAD TO REASON

Lesson No. 1: The Quest for the Fulcrum

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By

GENEVIEVE BURNELL

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From
A course of
private lessons
given for a youth
named David.

Lesson No. 1.

MOORE COLLEGE
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THE QUEST FOR THE FULCRUM

Why do you go to school, David?

David: "To learn."

Do you go to learn something in particular, or just general knowledge?

David: "Things to help me in life; arithmetic, spelling, science."

But whatever you study, there is one thing that you are trying to find out about everything; isn't there? Isn't it that you are trying to find out the truth about everything? You want to find out what is true about arithmetic, what is true about geography, and spelling, and all things. In studying any subject you are trying to find out what is true about it.

Even when you find out what is false about things, you are still finding out what is true; aren't you? If you find out things that are not true about arithmetic, you are finding out what is true about it in another way; aren't you? But whether you find out what is true or what is not true, you are still finding out what is basically true; isn't that right?

All education is founded upon the inquiry into truth. From the first grade in school, right through into high school and college, everybody is trying to find out the truth. There is something in you that makes you long to know the truth. Truth is like a magnet; it draws your mind to search for it. Your mind, your intellect (the standard equipment that you have to think with and know with and find out with) gravitates to truth.

All over the world, institutions for learning are established on the basis of

finding out what is true. All the different branches of science are really working toward just one thing, and that is toward the goal of what is true.

When people go to school, they have many years of general education--finding out what is true of everything in a general way. Then they go on and take postgraduate courses in order to study deeper into the truth about the particular branch of learning that they are most interested in. One person finds out all he can about science, and another one finds out about physics, and so on all down the line of learning. Everybody is trying to find out about his particular branch of learning--trying to find out what is SO in that field. At the same time he is learning what is NOT SO in that same field.

There is a search for a universal truth by which all these particular truths are true. Do you see what I mean? I mean that you might follow one branch of learning, and

somebody else might follow another, and somebody else another still, but there has to be a standard truth in every one of those things.

There are many different branches of learning. All study is a searching for the one universal truth. In a way learning is like a tree which has many branches, but they all belong to the same tree; they all grow on the one trunk. The branches bear the fruit, but they really are a part of the tree.

It's much the same in the matter of education and the search for truth. People follow these different branches of learning to find out the truth about this and the truth about that. But there is a higher form of investigation, and that is to find out the absolute truth by which all of these different truths are found to be the one truth.

It is said that the truly wise man seeks this basic, this absolute truth, by which everything is known to be truth. It is like an over-all knowledge. You can follow any one branch--the branches are not discarded--but it gives you a better grasp of the branches if you know that the truth that is true of them is true also of the tree.

In the instruction that we are entering upon now, the object is to establish a basic truth, an absolute truth. What do you think we mean by the word "truth"?

David: "Well, things that are true--not things that people say that are not true."

If I ask you to tell me the truth about something, what do I mean? What do I want you to tell me?

David: "Everything I know that is right."

A simple way of saying it is that I want you to tell me what is SO. That is a simpler way of saying the same thing that you said.

Do you have to be able to see things in order to make them so?

David: "No."

There may be many things that are so that we don't see; isn't that right?

Or does it have to be something that you know? Does truth have to be something that you know?

David: "I think so."

Well, couldn't a thing be true even though you didn't know it?

David: "Well, yes."

It could be. It doesn't depend on your knowing it to make it true; does it? If the thing is true, you can know it all right; but your knowing it does not make it true. It is something beyond your knowing and beyond your seeing; it is something over and above

all that anyone knows or sees. If a thing is true, then you have a way of approaching it. You can find out about it. But it doesn't depend on your knowing it, or seeing it, or feeling it, or having any contact at all with it.

For instance, there might be a stone in the middle of the earth that nobody knows anything about, nobody has ever seen; there has been no contact with it and no knowledge of it. And still it is true, just the same. Isn't that right?

So what we do here, in this inquiry into truth, is to uncover truth. We don't make things true by knowing them, but we uncover them to our understanding. It is the same way with all the sciences of education. You don't make a thing true because you know it, but you uncover it to your mind because it is there to be uncovered. Actually, all the inventions in the world were brought to light by dis-

covery. They didn't just arrive because somebody thought them up; they were already there. The light of somebody's mind uncovered them so that they became exposed and available. Atomic energy is not something that was just now created because somebody began to find out about it. It was already there. It has always been in the world, but we didn't know anything about it. It was not available to us. Because we didn't know about it, we couldn't use it, the scientists couldn't use it. But when they began to study into the atom, about what was in it, what was there began to emerge and make available what was always there.

All of the sciences are of that nature. They are not something created out of thin air, but their powers and abilities and opportunities are brought forth because we begin to find out about them.

This study that we are offering you here in this course of lessons, is not producing anything; we are simply uncovering something that is so, and making it available to you. It is something that has always been so.

Now, every person who starts on an inquiry into anything has to start from a certain place; he has to have, as it were, a base line to start from. If you are going to run a race with somebody, you have to start on a base line that is equal.

In the study of truth, you are to have a starting point. Well, if this is to be a point available to everyone, then everyone has to have a place to start from that is more or less equal. It has to be something that each person will start from that is equal to the place that everyone else will start from. Do you see? One won't have a head start, nor will he start 'way behind, but each one must have an equal chance.

Truth is a universal thing, and therefore it is available to everybody. So now we will find the place where we all start in our search for truth.

In our standard equipment, we are provided with something far above anything that the other things in creation have. The animals are next to man in creation, but we have something far greater than animals have. We are given intelligence. It is said that human beings are the only creatures that can use words, the only ones that have the ability to use symbols and words that have meaning to them. Of course animals make sounds, but they don't have the same way of communicating and conversing as we are doing now. They wouldn't be able to enter into this conversation we are now having--not at all. But we are able to do this, and we toss words back and forth and understand the meanings. We deal with words. When you

go to school, you are always using words; aren't you? You learn through words.

Well, if words are the form of our approach to understanding, we need to have a word that we can start from in making this inquiry into truth, a word that is true to each one of us, that gives us all an equal start. No matter what education we have, or what opportunities we have, or whether we are young or old, we still have this one thing that is true to us no matter what we may hear or feel or think. This is because we are human beings and have been given the gift of speech.

There is a word; there is something we put into the form of a word. Everybody has it, and it is really the base line from which he can start to investigate anything. Can you think of a word like that? Just one word that would be the same word that you would have, and I would

have--that we all would have? This word would be true to us whether we could think about it or feel it or sense it in any way; it is an automatic truth to each of us.

David: "Well,-----God,---Love."

There are many people who don't believe in God. We don't want to exclude them; you see, they are going to have a chance too. We have got to find something that they can start from that they can't help but believe in. Do you understand? There are lots of people who deny that there is a God, and lots of people who haven't even heard of God. Do you see? It doesn't mean that He is any less true because they have not heard about Him. God is God whether anybody knows about Him or not. But if they are going to find out about Him or anything else, they are going to have to have a place to start from, something they can stand on

themselves, something they know about without being told by anybody.

David: "Earth."

No; the earth is quite variable, and you have to know that with your senses; you have to feel the earth.

What I am thinking of is something that is closer to you than that. Suppose that you didn't have any way of contacting the earth. If you didn't have any senses active, you wouldn't know anything about the earth; would you? But there is something that you don't have to think about, and you don't have to sense; it is just there.

David: "Reason."

Reason is something you know you are using; but the word I want is something that is even closer to you than your reason. What is it that gives you the power of reason--something behind reasoning?

David: "Faith."

Faith is a spiritualized reason.

What is it that reasons?

David: "My mind."

Well, and what is it that gives your mind the opportunity to reason?

David: "My breath."

Who is it that is doing the breathing?

David: "God."

Well, He is really; but you might not know anything about God. What do you say when you go to school, and you say, "I'm going to find out about this"? Who is it that is standing out there to find out about it?

David: "Me!"

You say, "I am going to do this or that." Well, everybody starts out from that same "I." I start from my "I," and you start from your "I." Actually, we are starting from the same place. We are both starting from the "I" in us that we can't deny. Do you see? If we try

to deny it, still we are denying it from that same "I." Do you see what I mean?

One of the philosophers, Descartes, said, "I think, therefore I am." And another philosopher, Pascal, said, "I feel, therefore I am." But in both of those cases they forgot that it was the "I" that was doing it. Behind their thinking, behind their feeling, is this "I" that thinks and that feels. If it wasn't for this "I," this self, you wouldn't have any starting point.

You are starting out on this journey of inquiry; you are starting out from yourself. It is an automatic truth within you; you don't have to wake up in the morning and look yourself over to see if you are there; do you? You are there! You don't have to reason that you are there; it is something that you know automatically. You start right out and say, "I'm going to do this, and

I'm going to do that"; but you are always starting out from yourself.

So, that is something that is a truth to you that you can't deny. You couldn't reason it away. Even though you didn't have any senses active, you would still have your "I." Helen Keller couldn't see, and she couldn't hear, and she couldn't speak at first. But by making this connection with her inner "I," her "self," she was able to have a tremendously valuable life, very instructive and inspiring to everybody else.

So we all really start from the same place, and that is our base line; that's the cornerstone really of our inquiry into truth. You are starting out from your "I," and I am starting out from my "I." We are really starting out from the same place, and that place is the same place that everybody else is starting from

whether they know it or not. Even a Fiji Islander who did not know anything about God or Truth, or even about the world--who was not educated at all--would still have an "I" that he would start from to investigate and find out what is in his own sphere of information. Even a little, tiny baby who hasn't learned to speak and doesn't have any seeming connection with the outside world, is very strong about his "I." He is very demanding in relation to his "self"--especially when he wants the attention of his mother or father.

Every person's "I" is demanding truth.

Now, I asked you a while ago to give me the definition of the word "truth." What did you decide it was? I asked you to tell me the truth--from your own "I" you are establishing this, you see.

David: "Truth is what is so."

Why is it that you say that? Why don't you say, "Truth is that which is not so"?

David: "Well, because I think it is truth. I don't have to see it. It sounds like truth to me."

I am giving you perfectly free opportunity to say that truth is that which is not so; am I not? I mean, I am not urging you nor compelling you. Am I coercing you in any way to say that the truth is that which is so?

David: "No."

But still you don't say that truth is that which is NOT so. You say truth is that which IS so. And yet you are given every opportunity to say it is not so, if you want to. But there is something in you that won't let you say it; isn't that it?

David: "Because I know truth is what is so."

Yes, because your own reasoning compels you to say that. In fact, the real secret of it is that your mind can't conceive of anything opposite to that definition of truth; because it just simply doesn't belong, that's all.

Well, that is what is called a self-evident fact--truth is that which is so. If, when you are given a chance to say that it is that which is not so, but you won't, that shows there is something in your mind, and there is something in your reasoning powers, that won't let you say it and be honest. Do you see? You could say it in a game or something; but you wouldn't mean what you said; would you? To be honest with yourself you have to say, The truth is that which is so.

Well, that kind of compulsion of the mind, where you uncover what is called a self-evident fact, has a special name. Would you know what that name is? Prob-

ably you do not. It is called an "axiom." An axiom means the inability of the mind to conceive of an opposite. It is a self-evident fact. So, to say, "Truth is that which is," is expressing a self-evident fact. You really can't honestly say anything else. By your saying it, you are not making it so; but it is just simply something that your own mind is compelled to say because of your reasoning power. You would be violating your own reasoning power if you said something else. Well, that's an axiom.

By your own reasoning power you have uncovered a premise: The truth is that which is. That is your first uncovered axiom.

Now, you see, we are talking about a universal truth, not just a particular truth. A particular truth would be offered by various forms of education and would be in the form of information. But

we are talking about uncovering a universal truth.

The first universal truth that we have uncovered is: Truth is that which is so. Now, any truth that you find out, has got to be so!

That seems very simple and does not seem to amount to anything; but as we go on, you are going to see that from that first premise that you have uncovered, you are going to build a tremendous structure of reasoning.

As an example of what we are doing: If you are going to build a house, two things are demanded of you. First, you have to get material that is suitable; and, second, you have to have a design or a pattern that is right for the building. If you build a house out of material that is not suitable or is no good, the form does not amount to anything; does it? Or, if you are going to build a house out

of brick, but you don't have the proper form for the bricks to be built into, you'll have just a heap of bricks and not a house.

So in building this mental structure, in developing your mind along universal lines, you need good, solid material--true material. The material is true; and you need a pattern, a design, a form that is suitable. And when you have those two things--good substantial material and a correct form--you have a fine structure. But if you fail in either one of these, you have only a rickety structure that won't stand up.

Now, in our structure of axiomatic reasoning, we are going to put this fine, firm, substantial material into a form which is called the logical form. When we get through, we will have a substantial structure that nothing can shake down. Jesus said that we are to build

on a rock. We are not to build on shifting sand; because, if we do, when the first storm comes along, the building goes down. We build on a rock, on this rock of reasoning, and therefore we can't possibly be shaken down or destroyed or dissolved.

Now, the thing we have found out so far is that truth is that which is. Well, now, suppose we were going to try to find out about this truth by the things we see around us that we call the world around us. Do you think we would be on the right track? Could you depend always on your senses and on your own mind to show you what is true? Do you think you can? Many people are fooled you know; the senses are always fooling you. For instance, if you look at the moon on the horizon, it looks bigger to you than it does when it gets to the zenith. You can't always depend

on your senses, or even on your mind.

We are apt to say that a certain thing exists or that it has being, and therefore it is so. But you can't always judge by what your mind tells you has being. You might, in the dusk of the evening, see something that looks to you like a bear; and when you find out the truth about it, you might find that it is a stump. You'd call it a bear because it would look to you to have a real being; and you would say, "That's so; I do see a bear there." But your seeing it would not prove that it was so.

Many people go around judging truth by what they see and feel and think. And very often they get far off the track. That kind of reasoning is very common; it is the usual way that people reason; it's called "inductive" reasoning. In law courts you would call it "circumstantial evidence." They would say, "Well, I saw

that person do a certain thing, and I saw this other person do something else, and therefore these things are true." Well, even the courts of law have proved that circumstantial evidence is not always correct.

In the world of science, the physicists are always proving that things that people see and feel and think to be true may not be true at all. They build up a whole structure of what they think is true, and there may be no truth in it. We can't rely on our senses, nor on just the things that we may think in our minds.

But there is another way, another kind of reasoning that we use in this inquiry into truth. It is called "deductive" reasoning, and it means that we find out what truth really is, what truth itself is; and then, because truth is that which is so, we bring up the things that we see around us to correspond with truth, rather

than try to bring truth down to confirm the things that we see. Do you see what I mean? It is just a different approach, but this kind of reasoning is sound and true. Deductive reasoning is the logical form; it is abstract reasoning. It's a sure way. You find out what truth itself is--not letting it sink down into what you think, or what you imagine has being, or what you think is so, or what your senses tell you is so; but you find out what truth itself IS. And from there we go on to find out what has real existence around us. That is the form that we follow in this study.

Next time we will go on with our uncovering of what is true, and discover more about truth itself.

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