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## If Immaterial Things Exist, What Are the Laws of the Immaterial?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about what the laws of the immaterial are if immaterial things exist and how to use the third Columbo question in the Tactics material.

- \* If immaterial things exist, what are the laws of the immaterial, and where are they?
- \* How do you use the third Columbo question in the Tactics material?

### Transcript

Welcome to the last hashtag, S-T-R-S podcast of the year. Oh, my goodness. That's scary.

Alright, Greg, today we're going to start with a question that I think you will be interested in. This one comes from the rest of the world. This one comes from the change of pace.

This one comes from Doug. How do you respond to the challenge of, quote, if immaterial things exist, what are the laws of the immaterial, and where are they? Where are the laws, or where are the immaterial things? Oh, that's a good question. I assumed he meant where are the laws, but I mean, but you could answer both.

Well, it's interesting the way the question is put, because it presumes that everything is law-driven. The physical world is law-driven, and therefore, if there is not a physical world, if there is an immaterial world rather, then that world must be driven by laws as well. But why would anyone think that's true? I don't even think this world is law-driven, probably in the sense that he means it.

Now, he's looking at the natural realm. I'm just presuming on this, and I think it's a fair presumption because a lot of people make this assumption who are physicalists, and I think this is coming from somebody who is probably a physicalist and challenging the idea of dualism that there is an immaterial world as well, or go the questions about it. If the physical world is utterly and completely law-driven, then everything happens as a result of a prior physical thing happening.

The simplest way to think of this is Domino's falling. Why did the 10th Domino fall? Because the 9th Domino hit it and drove it into the 11th Domino. Notice that on that characterization, physical determinism is in place that everything is happening because of some prior physical condition following a pattern that you might call natural law, if you will, that forces it after fashion to happen the way it did.

Now, if that is the case, then the universe is just a machine, and everything in the universe is a machine, including human beings. So, therefore, if human beings are merely like that, then you cannot answer any questions about why the world is the way it is, because whatever you believe is the right answer to that is a belief that is simply going to be the result of the physical circumstances that caused you to have that belief, because you are locked into a physicalistic, deterministic system. And that's why determinism and physicalism go together of necessity.

It's why science works. If you have a regularity of cause and effect in the physical system, you have all event causation, which is what I'm discussing here. One event causes another event.

If you set up the dominoes in the same way every time, you are going to get the same consequence of the following dominoes every time. That's called experimental repeatability. Science cannot work without a physical system that is driven by those regularities.

The problem with calling them laws, and this would be a problem even for a careful philosophical atheist, is the implication is that there is some external force called a law that is causing the dominoes, et cetera, to behave the way they behave. But that introduces an occult or hidden force into the picture, which a materialist don't want to introduce. There is no such thing as natural law.

What we have is patterns that seem to work consistently, given one set of physical conditions, the following set always takes place. In a kind of rough and ready way, we call that responding to natural law, but strictly speaking, we can't infer from that an outside force that's causing it to happen. Now, if there's no outside first thing we acknowledge that's going to happen, then it doesn't always happen to happen that way.

Some other outside force could also impede upon it, like an agent. So if you have all these dominoes standing in a row, I can flick the first one, which causes all the rest of them to fall. I, as an agent, caused the first thing to happen.

And then the events that I initiated with the first flick resulted in all the rest of the dominoes falling, which means that it looks like there are two types of causes in the universe. One is physical or event causation. The other one is agency.

An agency is self-initiating. That's the nature of agency. Nothing caused me to flick the domino.

I chose on a self-caused, I should say, my action is caused by myself. It's a will in motion, so to speak. Okay, well, then the implications here for world view is physicalism has got to be false.

Because if it were true, then we'd never know anything about anything. We would just be automatically believing what was we were caused to believe by the physical circumstances that came before us. But it does seem like we know things.

In fact, we could learn things and test to see whether we learned the right thing. Okay, you can tell me what your phone number is, and then I could beat out the phone number on the pad, and you're answering me, machine will answer. So you give me information that I can demonstrate to be true by going through the method and, oh, okay, that does match your actual phone number.

It's a simple illustration, but we do that kind of thing all the time. All right, so it's not even the physical world that is strictly determined by laws. And if that's the case, because agents can interfere and initiate things that are not caused by physical causes, all right, then why would anybody think that the material world has got to be that way? I don't think the material world is governed by any kind of kind of immaterial physics.

Maybe it is. I don't know. But I don't have to know the material immaterial world has a physics associated with it, in some sense, to know that the material is real.

Just like I don't have to know about the physics of the physical world to know that there is a physical world that operates according to certain patterns. Just thinking, you know, prehistoric man, our first human beings, whatever, they didn't know hardly anything. Certainly didn't know about physics, but they could figure out things and learn and draw conclusions about regularities.

Every time I rub these sticks together, it gets hot. And if I had the right tender down there, that heat from the sticks is going to make a flame. Okay.

So this is the question is completely wrong headed on a number of different levels. And it almost as if, unless I can explain the physics of the immaterial world, I'm not justified in believing in an immaterial world, but we are in touch with the immaterial world as much as we're in touch with the material world. I can only know the material world by accessing it through my senses, but my senses are a function of my soulless, my immaterial soulless activity where I see and I have sensations and could you can have sensations without any physical object at all.

We've done this before. You can you can close your eyes and imagine your mother, you know, working at the computer or something. And you could what color blouses you were and you could see that, but your mother's not in your head.

The image is in your brain. We have immediate access to the immaterial world all the time. I am choosing words right now, some words rather than other words, to make my point more clear, my choice of words is an act of will and an act of intention.

These are not functions of physical objects or functions of consciousness, which isn't physical.

Okay. And I'm trying to, with my words, make my meanings clear.

But the meanings are physical. They don't extend in space. We have just been used to speaking in such materialistic terms all the time that we forget that we are totally immersed in an immaterial realm that we have access to every waking moment of our lives and we manipulate all the time, just like I'm using language, not a communicate ideas.

And so consequently people are, gee, they're they don't feel comfortable talking about the immaterial realm because it's not real and what they mean by real is it's not physical. Well, by definition, physics can only apply to physical things. Those kinds of laws only apply to those things.

If a spirit is an agent, I'm trying to think if there could be other immaterial things that aren't agents. Am I, can you think of something that? Well, I mean, heaven is a location of sorts. It's in the immaterial realm, but it's a location that can be described and people, when we die ourselves, our immaterial selves go somewhere.

They're not still with our physical body, which decays, they go to be absent from the bodies to be present with the Lord. Well, there is a kind of location there. Now, the only way we can think of location really is in physical terms.

And that's why I think the scriptures, when it does describe it, it describes it with language we understand, but it's analogical. And so we talk about the heaven is the city with the walls and the gates and all that other stuff, but there is a place there and there I suspect there are objects. I have no reason to think that there are no objects, but, but, but cells in there.

So I, but a speculative, it's, it's such a mystery because it's a whole different world. But we know at least in terms of agents that are, our choices are not governed by laws. We are actually, we're actually initiating things as you said.

So that's a perfect example of how there doesn't have to be any sort of mechanistic laws for every immaterial thing. Yeah. And by the way, abstract objects, if they do exist, some people question a bit of abstract objects like kindness or the number two or, or the idea of happiness or something like that.

Those are all abstract objects. If they, if they exist, then they, those are objects in the immaterial realm that exists, but they're not persons, you know, so. So what would you say if they say, well, then where are they immaterial realm? Can you even, I was going to say, can you even say, does that even apply? Where are they? But I do think we are localized, even as spirits in some sense, right? Well, actually the, I think there is a, what's, what's called an ill local presence and ill local means that we have that the, like our souls are not, they are not existing in three-dimensional space because they're not physical, but they are united in a mysterious way with the body that is.

So we could say, this is the body that is my body, but my thoughts. I mean, you could ask the

question, where are my thoughts? No, where? Well, then they are so, they're nowhere physical because if they were somewhere physical, they would have to have physical qualities and anything that's physical response to the laws of physics and chemistry and extended space and has three-dimensional location in space, which I thought clearly don't have that. I'm just simply saying we are aware of all of these immaterial things that are not in physical space.

They are in an immaterial location, but the minute you say location, we start thinking about physical space. And so I don't know any other way to characterize it. And just because we can't characterize it in physical terms doesn't mean it's not real.

Of course, it's real. We are beholding these things immediately and directly. I am immediately aware of my thoughts.

There's nothing in between that's conveying them. It isn't like there's words that my thoughts are forming and then now I hear them in my ear and now I know what I'm thinking. No, I'm right there, they're immediately available to me.

So these things are all real, but they're in a dimension that is not physical. So what sounds like what his friend is doing is saying if immaterial things are physical, then what are the laws? Like he's actually, he's just confusing the categories. If they exist in his mind, if they're physical, then what are the laws that cover in this? It's exactly right.

It's like asking. And by the way, this is a classic example. What color are my thoughts? Well, obviously you're trying to assign a physical quality to a non physical thing.

And so the question makes no sense. This is a fallacy called a category error. How loud is the left hand turn? Left hand turns don't have noises.

You know, associate, you know, so these are category errors and that's what's going on here. But notice how the force of physicalism manifesting itself in this question is the inability to break out of that. And it's so ironic because even the question that's being asked is not physical.

The meanings that are characterized by the question are not physical. Where is your question? Yeah, that's right. The words are not physical.

Now the tokens are like word. I just had a, I could also write on W O R D and there's a different type of physical token. But the thing, it's tokening the type that is pointing to that's not physical.

Information is not physical. And we know that because we can express it in different mediums. So if you can, if you can write something, an idea down on paper or you can speak it or you can draw a picture of it, whatever the idea can be expressed through different ways because the idea is not physical.

No physical thing can be in two places at once. This is the problem with time travel and all that. Remember back to the future.

There he was over there by the old trailer and there he was up on the hill watching himself. So it can't be. And this is where lightness is law of the indiscernibility of identicals comes in.

And I paid a lot of money to be able to say that a lot. I don't want to let people think. One thing is identical to, if one thing is identical to another, it has all the same qualities.

It's actually not two things, but one. So Greg Kolkle is identical to the president of Santa Reason. Everything is true about Greg Kolkle.

If I'm identical to the president of Santa Reason, it's true about the president. Okay. So if a thing is a physical thing, then it's going to have all those qualities that are true of physical things.

If it doesn't have a quality true of a physical thing, then it's not a physical thing. And that's where that principle comes into play. Our thoughts don't extend in space like other physical things.

Therefore, they're not physical. They're immaterial. So Greg, I'm going to bring in the next question here because I think you can use your answer in light of this previous question.

So this one comes from Billy. How do you use tactics three? So in answering that, how would you use tactics three with somebody who came and asked you this question? So explain what that is and then how would you use it in this situation? All right. So you just asked me a question, right? Is that question real? Yes.

Where is it? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it is that simple.

The question's not in my head. It didn't go from your head physically into my head physically. You use language to communicate an idea which is not physical, which my mind is capable of understanding, even if it's using my brain.

So it's a question itself is not even physical. Right. So explain what tactics three is and what you just did.

That tactics three is using questions to make a point. So I could say, well, the question you just asked me is not physical. So therefore, there must be non-physical things.

You just exemplified a non-physical thing and immaterial thing. That would be stating the point. Okay.

It's fair, but it's an elegant. When I when I engage you in a Q&A and I ask some particular questions about it, we take a little bitty steps to get to the point and my final question is to drop that in your lap. So you have to respond.

So I said, I don't know. The first thing is, is that a question? Yes. That's a question.

Is the question real? Yes. The question is real. What physical place is the question in? Where is

the question? Where is that real thing? It's in the air.

It's in my head. It's in my mind. I know the question.

I could repeat the question. You could repeat the question. It's in your mind and it's in my mind.

If the question is physical, how can it be in two places at the same time? Notice that these every one of these is a question and notice the first couple of steps were to take away any possible exits. So I'm getting the person to affirm what is obviously the case about the thing they're asking. We're laying it all down there.

And as I described this in street smarts, which street smarts is a book given to dealing with tough challenges using the third step of Colombo or the tactile green plan using questions to make a point. I'm actually enlisting you as an ally in this. Because if I made a series of statements, then they can always, you could always stay in the role play.

You could always just disagree with my statements. Well, I said, so is the question. So it's a real question, right? The question is real.

He said, well, it all depends on what you mean by real. You could get that. Then we're now we're now we're distracted.

But, but if I ask you, then you affirm it. You put that piece on the table. And once you put all the pieces on the table in response to my fair questions, then it's one simple step from those affirmations to go to the final question, which makes my point.

And it's very difficult for you now as a person, an interlocutor here in our conversation to back trap track over those things that you affirmed with the case. Now that whole process can be misused. And we've seen it misused before where people are affirming things and they don't realize what they're affirming that it's backing them into a corner illicitly.

In this case, it's not like that though. And the way I teach this in the tactics book and in street smarts is we're not using an illicit approach. We're asking fair questions that go to the heart of the matter, but they're one little step to the conclusion.

Yeah, we're not trying to manipulate them. We're trying to enlighten the, you know, we're trying to bring to light all of the ideas that we're talking about so that they can see them clearly in order and see how they fit together. Precisely.

And in fact, of course, on the tactics book, there are all, I'm sorry, these, the street smarts book, there are all of these, all of these dialogues where I do step through these things. And you were very helpful for me in editing that so that people can see each fair step. And if in the draft that I sent you the step wasn't a fair step, you caught that and we made edits show people to see I'm not manipulating.

I'm not twisting anything. I'm asking questions that are appropriate to the circumstance. And

that is the way to proceed.

So that your point is persuasive. If people feel they're tricked, then they're not going to follow that. Now, sometimes they do think they're tricked, but then you have to ask them, well, where did I trick you? There's no ambiguity here.

There's no equivocation. These words could mean different things here. It's really straightforward, but they just don't want to accept the consequence.

Well, if they don't want to accept it, they don't have to, that's up to them. But anyway, this is what I just did. The case with the immaterial realm is actually quite simple, a couple of quick steps.

And the reason it's simple is because the immaterial realm is so self-evident to everyone willing to think about it. If you are totally locked into a materialistic understanding of the world, you're not going to, you're not going to think about. For example, when somebody says to me on this discussion, for example, about the mind, the existence of the mind, what happens if we can get a computer to think how they think? That will prove that there is no soul.

I said, all that will prove is that the computer has a soul. And it's not circular because the computer would be doing the thing that only soulish things can do. And that's the point.

Well, thank you, Greg. Those were great questions. Thank you, Doug and Billy.

And just to reiterate, if you want to learn more about tactics three, then street smarts is the way to go. And just remember, as with all the tactics, these are there to serve truth and to serve the other person. They're there to help them to see if they're not there to manipulate or... Obvious.

Or win something. The goal is always truth. You always have to have truth in mind and truth clarity and truth as your goal.

And I think it's hard to go wrong if those are your goals to serve others. That's right. And so obviously, all the tactics books are great.

So I reckon... Well, there's the original one. Yeah. And then there's the anniversary edition, which had extra... Which supplants the original.

There's so much more information there. I guess there are only two. But there are three Colombo questions.

So learn all three of those. There you go. Well, thank you so much.

And we hope to hear from you. We have a whole year ahead of us. So start sending in your questions.

And we will consider your question for the hashtag SCRS podcast. This is Amy Hall and Greg



Cocle for Stand to Reason.