

SCIENCE AND RELIGION
GRADED PAPER 2
KATIE BYRNE

The thesis and arguments

Your thesis is not clearly stated and delineated. Are you simply juxtaposing determinism and free will? Are you showing us that science and religion are incompatible? Or that somehow they can be compatible? After your introduction, I knew what your topic was, but not so much your thesis. Your **last** sentence makes clearer your intent, but that's too late.

What is more important is the lack of structure to your arguments, the weak focus of those arguments, and the heavy repetition of your presentation. As a reader, I was frequently unsure as to why you had presented a certain piece of information or a particular point of view, since it was disconnected from the remainder of your argument. Some of your arguments tended to restate established elements of your topic, and other weren't arguments at all.

Your conclusion is therefore unsurprising. It is not notable that a strict belief in determinism does not fit with Christian belief. It is only mildly more interesting that **some** scientists are not strict determinists, and so they may hold Christian beliefs.

The writing

Too much repetition, too much excess verbiage, and too many loose arguments. You could have made your point in three pages, so you should have done so.

Items marked on the paper

(1) *Determinism* is not a scientific hypothesis. It is a philosophical conjecture, and it is not amenable to scientific evaluation. Pitting science and religion against one another using this question is a faulty construct.

(2) Careful. What is *prediction* here? Performed by whom? And performed how?

(3) Is that Collins' definition? (I don't think that it is.) Is it some other definition? Quote and cite!

(4) The two parts of this sentence have nothing to do with one another. What's the relationship? What point are you trying to make?

(5) Whether the source of morality can be addressed scientifically is a debatable point. Collins tries to claim otherwise, but his argument does not put to rest the recent efforts to explore morality as an evolved trait.

(6) What does any of this have to do with determinism? You've lost your reader here. I had to go back to the first page to remember what your thesis was.

(7) You present a great deal of repetitive background on why determinism and free will conflict. But where is the argument? Here's where the lack of a clearly stated thesis becomes more evidence. You have no point to support, so you have no arguments to present.

Grade: C+

Katie Byrne
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Paper 2, Round 1

The Harmony and Discord of Christianity, Science, and Determinism

Religion and science ~~are utilized as methods to seek to determine~~ reasons for ^{awk.} existence, the meaning of life, and the physical and metaphysical worlds. Many people, such as Richard Dawkins, choose to explain their world solely through scientific theories and investigation, and others solely through faith and theology, but many find a middle ground between the two. ^{Where does he say that?} As Francis Collins says, as long as ^{Quote & cite!} one does not take too strict an interpretation of science or religion, the two seemingly opposite viewpoints can consistently and logically fit together. However, there are some scientific hypotheses and theories that are incompatible with religion. ¹ One of these hypotheses is that of determinism, which states that no event ² is unpredictable. Determinism is contrary with the doctrine of free will, a principal pillar of Christianity; therefore it is impossible to be both a determinist and a Christian. ^{Like what? Too vague. Cite!} Recent scientific evidence, especially in physics, has cast doubts on determinist viewpoints and not all scientists believe in determinism. Many of these non-deterministic scientists find it possible to accept Christianity and science as complementary rather than ^{word choice} contrasting.

One example of someone who finds scientific and religious beliefs complementary is Francis Collins, an evangelical Christian and head of the Human Genome Project, ^{not relevant here.} ~~which mapped the human genome.~~ ^{believes} ~~He explains to us~~ that science is a way of understanding how nature works, ³ but that scientific methods are unable to answer questions about the existence of God and the meaning of life. His work on

relevance?

Thesis?

italicise

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the Human Genome Project led him to believe in theistic evolution, meaning that

God gave us the ability to look at how he made the world through science. For

Collins, science and religion coincide in their ability to explain the physical and metaphysical worlds. Although Genesis's description of the creation of the world

conflicts with both itself and Collins says that approximately forty percent of scientists are believers and that science allows us to view a "hint of God's mind."

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President Clinton supported this belief of Collins in a speech in 2000. He said that the Human Genome Project is "the first glimpse of the instruction book formerly known only to God," encouraging Americans to find this compromise between science and religion.

Not even slightly relevant.

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Many scientists turn to religion for a continuation of scientific explanation because they feel science falls short of answering the metaphysical questions of the universe. Richard Dawkins argues that science can assign a probability value to the

existence of God, but science cannot actually disprove the existence of a God. Collins

Unquoted quote out of context.

also argues that science has no net in which to catch God, and that science has no way of explaining humans' sense of morality therefore, belief in a supernatural

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being can easily coincide with scientific views.

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↑ grammar.

Collins also discusses the reason so many Christians find science and religion incompatible. Many devout Christians fear that if they begin to learn about evolution, they could end up completely losing their faith. A number of the most devout Christians were ones who were not born into their faith but found it themselves through science, such as Collins. Conversely, many scientists who would not even consider a religious interpretation of the world are those that were raised

religious and shied away from the beliefs they were raised in, such as Dawkins. Too narrow an interpretation of science or religion can cause them to appear disjunctive, ^{disjoint} but if one remains open-minded ^{judgemental?} to scientific theories and understands that Genesis shouldn't be taken as a literal reading, Collins believes that science and religion can be complementary.

^{repeat} One of the fundamental beliefs of religion is the doctrine of free will, which is contradictory to the scientific hypothesis of determinism. In *Religion and Science*, Russell talks of three doctrines of religion that science can neither prove nor disprove: God, immortality, and freedom. According to Thomas Aquinas and other philosophers, these three ideas can be proved true by human reason and are part of "natural religion." Under the doctrine of free will, Christians believe that humans have the ability to choose the course of their lives, ~~between right and wrong which determines whether they go to heaven or hell.~~ ^{no.} This conflicts with the scientific hypothesis of determinism. Determinism is a scientific hypothesis that says that with the knowledge of causal laws and the happenings in a certain sphere, humans can predict what will happen in the center of this sphere within the time it takes light to get from the exterior of the sphere to the center. In laymen's terms, the doctrine of determinism suggests that all actions and thoughts by every human being have been predetermined by the events in one's life and surroundings, and that every action could theoretically be predicted if given a lifetime of calculations to achieve this prediction. As belief in determinism takes away people's ability to decide between what is morally good or bad, it undermines central principles of Christianity. Under determinism, every decision a person makes, the outcome of

^{cite?} ^{like who?}

Why define it more strictly here?

grammar

that decision, and the fate of the person has been formerly ascertained. Even though we have desires or reasons to do something, these desires we feel are predetermined. It conflicts with the Christians' belief in heaven, hell, and morality. Scientists who support the doctrine of determinism, therefore, cannot find their beliefs compatible with religion.

Support?

Since its origin, Determinism has been challenged by religious leaders, but now is also being challenged by scientists on scientific grounds. According to quantum physics, there are methods to predict the probability of what an atom will do in certain circumstances, but no ^{yet} law to determine how a single atom will act ~~in certain circumstances and to determine how a single atom behaves~~ and why it behaves how it does. As Russell said, "We do not know any law determining the choice in an individual instance." This principle seems to hold true for humans as well: we can predict the probability of what groups of human beings will do, but we ^{yet} cannot predict the actions of an individual. Russell also tells us that we do not have "any strong reason to believe in determinism." It has been discovered that laws that determine how bodies move may be "merely statistical" and have an appearance of regularity, but these laws cannot tell you what a single body will do. A person cannot be both a determinist and Christian, because Christians believe they can control their choices and fate.

Out of left field.

With non-literal reading of the scripture and want for a more metaphysical explanation of the universe, belief in both religion and science can be consistent with each other. Determinism, on the other hand, cannot be consistent with Christian views.

Works Cited

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions- Thomas S. Kuhn

The Language of God- Francis S. Collins

Religion and Science- Bertrand Russell

“Richard Dawkins Explains “The God Delusion”” -NPR

“Francis Collins on “The Language of God””- NPR