

## Review of Paper 2

Can purely scientific and religious views of the world be reconciled?

### I. Thesis

- The thesis of the paper is unclear to me.
- It is clear that the thesis concerns the reconciliation of religious and scientific views. It seems that the thesis is that a religious scientist is not a contradiction but an “explorer of the natural world in God’s universe in a way that reconciles scientific and religious views to attain a more complete view of life.”
- If that actually is the thesis of the paper, that is fine. The only issue that I would have with this thesis is that you seem to contradict it later on in the paper. For example, in the last line of the second paragraph, you stated, “it follows that a scientist who believes in God is failing to apply scientific thinking to some parts of his analysis of the natural world.”
- If a religious scientist is unable to apply scientific thinking to some aspects of his analysis of the natural world, doesn’t this mean that scientific and religious views cannot be fully reconciled with one another?
- Furthermore, if these scientific principles cannot be applied by the scientist, doesn’t this also insinuate that he is using mostly his religious views in order to attain “a more complete” view of life?
- Although you acknowledge the contradictory nature of these statements in the following paragraph, that paragraph itself has issues, and fails to fully address the problem with your thesis. I will talk about that in Section II.

### II. Quality of Argument/Logic

- The second paragraph starting on the first page that continues onto the second page contains a great example of the different ways in which science and religion seek to explain the natural world. The example of the blue sky should definitely be kept in since it is an exemplary illustration of the differences between science and religion.
- Although you correctly acknowledge in the third paragraph of the paper that there are “certain questions” that defy scientific analysis, the example of morality is not one of these. Since you cite Richard Dawkins, it follows that scientific analysis is applicable to the subject of morality. In his NPR interview, Dawkins asserted that morality is a vestige leftover from our times spent living in tribal groups and as small, tight-knit collective societies. He therefore uses a type of scientific analysis to give his explanation of morality. Also, I am unsure of whether he has stated that morality is a “genetic mistake.” Perhaps you can cite his work so that it will be easier to reference for the reader.
- This third paragraph is also where you acknowledge the contradictory statement you made concerning your thesis. Since the argument here is a little weak, trying to justify that that contradiction doesn’t really matter is not a wise thing to do, only because your thesis is so important to the rest

of the paper so you might want to consider reworking the structure of the paper as well.

- Your thesis is again tested later in the paper, within the fifth paragraph, when you state that “a religious scientist may be a contradiction because believing in God is an unscientific idea that cannot be explained through observation or experimentation.” Again, you are purposely contradicting your thesis.

### III. Acknowledgement of Speculation

- For the most part, words like “may” and “perhaps” do a great job in this paper of acknowledging speculation and addressing the fact that this subject makes it difficult for absolutes to be spelled out.
- However, one issue can be found in the third paragraph where it is cited that “attempting to use religion to explain morality is equally unsatisfactory.” Does the Christian religion not posit that acting morally, following the Ten Commandments, and following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ is derived in some ways from the will of God? You argue that Christianity does not provide a persuasive explanation for immoral behavior and yet, many people do believe that immorality is caused by people being led astray by the devil. This explanation is persuasive for those people.

### IV. Flow

- There are some organizational issues that I have with the paper.
- The structure of the paper is a little bit odd to me. I understand that with your second paragraph you are trying to predict an argument against your thesis; you are trying to head off the critic from the outset. This is fine except for the fact that your defense in the following (third) paragraph falls short. Therefore, I would reconsider contradicting your thesis statement in the paragraph directly following it.
- I have asserted my issue with the example of morality that you use in the previous section so obviously I am perturbed by the large amount of time you spend on the subject. I might consider using another example of fortifying your argument a little bit more.
- Finally, it seems that the reference to Francis Collins and a successful example of a religious scientist comes a little bit late in the paper; your concluding paragraph is the only one that truly coincides with your thesis statement. I would revise that part of your paper as well.

### V. Terms & Concepts

- Any terms and concepts used were clearly understood or well defined.

### VI. Grammar

- Perhaps it is nitpicking, but I thought it might flow nicer if you used “in contrast” rather than “by contrast” in your introductory paragraph.
- I don’t believe that the ‘a’ in atheist is commonly capitalized since atheism is not a religion.
- I would, however, capitalize ‘Human Genome Project’ in that same paragraph.

- In the second paragraph, it is better to use the infinitive of the verb 'provide' so that the sentence reads; "...developing enough evidence *to* provide answers..."

VII. Language

- The use of the word "complementary" in your introductory paragraph to describe the relationship between science and religious is ingenious. It does a great job of illustrating your point and is definitely a great example of good diction.