

Science and Religion

Essay #2 Topic 3

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The Benefits of Religion on Science

Einstein once said, "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind." This statement is a unique insight; it lays the groundwork for the mutualistic relationship of two of the greatest ideals of all time. This essay will prove that science and religion can and in fact should work together. Science opens religion's eyes to the natural world while religion gives scientists faith in their "aspiration toward truth and understanding (1)." As this essay will demonstrate, it is possible for a scientist to be religious because it is religion that gives the scientist a conscience and faith. "What happens after life?" or "What existed before this universe?" these philosophical questions of life, that have been asked throughout history, need something more than just the limited scope of the scientific lens in order to comprehend them. Having only a scientific scope is too narrow a view of the world. At the same time religion is not the all knowing and all Seeing Eye that strict theologians make it out to be. It needs some guidance when it comes to the natural world and must accept the ideas that science has to offer. Science and Religion are consistent with one another and both should inspire the other. Neither science nor religion should exist ignorant of one another, because as Einstein pointed out without one another both are flawed. A scientist can be religious and in fact should be because when science does not take into account religion it forgoes its conscience, which leaves out an awareness of right

and wrong. At the same time religion can't discount science because without it religion is being ignorant and close-minded. Science and religion can and should coexist because they both have a positive affect on the other.

Forty percent of all working scientist claim to be believers, therefore it is possible for a scientist to be religious. Specifically look at two of sciences greats, Francis Collins, the man who mapped the human genome, and Albert Einstein. Francis Collins started his life with little religious background and through his years of scientific research discovered passion in religion. One of his greatest accomplishments, creating a computer that could map genes has led him not discount the existence of God but instead to revere him. To Collins the genome is not evidence against God but is in fact part of God's language, "the elegance and complexity of our own bodies and the rest of nature as a reflection of God's plan." Ironically he found his faith in science, while studying in medical school and reflecting upon the life and death situations of his patients. To Collins science is restricted to a standard of truth, for example a collection of atoms; it takes a leap of faith to show that there is some meaning or purpose to everything.

Albert Einstein who was regarded by many to be one of the greatest physicists of all time was born into a Jewish background and had a "lifelong respect for his Jewish heritage." Throughout most of his life Einstein was not a practicing Jew but at the same time he was vehemently opposed to Atheism. Robert Dawkins was mistaken when he tried to describe Einstein's view of a God. Einstein does believe in a God, only more of a Deist form of a God. The universe we live in according to Einstein is Gods universe and in his studying of physics he

only wanted to try and understand God's thoughts and feeling when he created this place. Einstein believed that God showed himself in the "harmony of what exists." So can a scientist be religious? Yes it is very clear from these two examples that a scientist can be religious. If 40 percent of the scientific community can be religious it is clear that it is possible for a scientist to be religious.

The feelings that religion endows upon men are important ones to science. "Cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research," some of the most motivated scientists in history have been the most religious. It is important for a scientist to be religious because religion is a strong motivator. Georges Lemaitre, the man who proposed the Big Bang Theory was once a priest. It took his religious background in combination with his scientific knowledge in order to come to the now most accepted theory to the beginning of the universe.

Religion instills good judgment and brings diversity to the scientific mind. Some say that science doesn't need religion but there are many moral and ethical issues that can be helped when religion is applied. Take for example the new particle accelerator or the atomic bomb. These two items came from science but can have detrimental affect on the world. Without the conscience that religion gives us these things can be applied to have negative influence. Some things are not to be trifled with lightly and should be seriously scrutinized before they are applied.

Einstein wrote a series of essays on science and religion and the interaction between the two, and in every one he came to the conclusion that it is best for a scientist to be religious. The scientific method itself supplies in the end nothing but facts and how the facts are conditioned by one another. This objective knowledge doesn't have the ability to give any answer to the large questions in life. It has nothing to tell us about human goals and aspirations. Knowledge is a remarkable thing to have but it is insufficient in acting as a guide. The best scientists are those that are, "imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding," and that feeling finds its source in religion. Goals and values are fundamentally based in religion, which is why science needs to take into account religion; otherwise it is leaving out a view of its ultimate ending point.

As is demonstrated by the many examples it is possible and in fact likely for a scientist to be in some way or another religious. Religion plays an important role in science which is why it is not just possible for a scientist to be religious, it is essential. Religion gives scientist a conscience and helps them come to an understanding of their ultimate goals and values.