

12-1-2016

The Science and Religion Relationship

Keeley Samsonik
St. John Fisher College

[How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?](#)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum>

 Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Samsonik, Keeley (2016) "The Science and Religion Relationship," *Verbum*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 7.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol14/iss1/7>

This document is posted at <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol14/iss1/7> and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.

The Science and Religion Relationship

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The widely known debate of science and religion has been around for hundreds of years. This is a widely conflicted debate because it is hard to separate both sides. Though it is easy to see that science and religion explain problems differently. Science answers questions by explaining how and religion wonders why. My thesis is that science and religion contrast each other but also can complement one another and it is important to recognize this."



Keeley Samsonik

The Science and Religion Relationship

Introduction

The widely known debate of science and religion has been around for hundreds of years. This is a widely conflicted debate because it is hard to separate both sides. Though it is easy to see that science and religion explain problems differently. Science answers questions by explaining how and religion wonders why. My thesis is that science and religion contrast each other but also can complement one another and it is important to recognize this.

Religion and Science Work Hand in Hand with Each Other

Author John F. Haught in his book *Science and Faith* states that “science is concerned with the physical causes of events in the natural world. Theology asks about the ultimate meaning of the world and human existence” (n. p.). Haught is stating the difference between science and religion by going in depth about how these two things differ. That statement is true because science and religion are two different ways of thinking and it is important to understand both of them. Though they are different it does not mean that one is right or one is wrong. The difference shows that there are more than one way to understand something. Haught says that “science asks

how things came to be and how they work; theology asks why the world exists at all and whether it has a kind of importance that science cannot comprehend” (n. p.). Clearly this shows how both science and religion explain issues. Science will approach a problem with a factual method and will find what caused it. Religion will ask more meaningful questions that go in depth to really discover why something happened. Hence the reasons why Haught states that the “scientific method by definition leaves out all questions about meaning, purpose, values and God” (n. p.). That statement is proof that science does not ask the hard questions, but allows religion to handle them. Another way Haught explains the difference is stating that “science is a fruitful method of learning some important things about the physical world, but there are other ways of knowing as well” (n. p.). He is explaining that one will not truly be able to understand something without knowing on a deeper level. Haught repeatedly says to “keep faith and science separate” (n. p.). He makes this point significant because science and faith should not be connected because they both have different thought processes. Haught brings up the point that the “scientific method isn’t able to pick up any signals of a deity even if God exists. Genuine science is content to express its understanding of the universe in abstract models and mathematical equations” (n. p.). He focuses on making sure one can understand the role science plays. One other point that Haught makes is that “the experience of God comes to us not through impersonal scientific method, but through a distinctly interpersonal mode of awareness” (n. p.). God is not found through doing experiments or research but God is discovered through soul searching and finding out who we truly are. No one can find God for us and there is no right or wrong way to find him either. This is why Haught’s statement is highly significant to being able to understand religions’ role.

Holmes Rolston III in *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* agrees that science and religion are different. They both realize that the world's issues can be solved, just their method of solving them differs. Rolston states: "Science and religion share the conviction that the world is intelligible, susceptible to being logically understood, but they delineate this under different paradigms" (22). Rolston says science and religion have different methods of solving problems in the world. The roles that science and religion have are presented when Rolston says that "in the cleanest cases we can say that science operates with the presumption that there are causes to things, religion with the presumption that there are meanings to things" (22). Science is more concerned with how something happens and religion is focused on why. A deeper understanding of this idea is expressed when Rolston says that "science and religion share a theoretical mode of interest. Both want to operate out of a model or theory, a plot or a pattern, that gives a universal intelligibility to what is observed in particular episodes"(27). He is saying that they can share a common goal of solving an issue. He then goes on to talk about how religion and science look or react at things differently. For example, Rolston states that "religion can tolerate the presence of surprise more than can science" (27). This makes sense because science focuses more on facts so they can predict outcomes, while religion does not predict things but lets things happen as they are supposed to occur. Rolston says that in science the "scientific models must be specifically extensible in advance to all forthcoming phenomena, and any incapacity to predict is unnerving" (27); scientists rely on knowing everything at any place of time and having control of a situation. In religion, one believes that things happen for a reason and do not need to be in control in a situation. Being able to recognize all these differences will help give better insight in how both science and religion operate. This will help show different perspectives on how to solve a problem.

Even though science and religion are different, that does not mean they cannot work together. In fact science and religion can complement each other. Omomia O. Austin has similar views to Haught in the sense that he agrees that science and religion contrast each other. Austin says that “science could be said to be objective, as it relies on experimental methodology. While religion is subjective, relying on experience” (982). By saying this he means science purely just deals with facts and religion looks deeper within something. The author, Omomia Austin, gives a better understanding of this when he says that “science depends mainly on reason, while religion depends on intuition” (982). A main conflicting idea that is brought up between science and religion is how life is created and what happens after people die. Austin explains that “it is commonly argued that science is not able to answer the fundamental questions of the mystery of life and death. It is mostly from religion man seeks answers to these realities” (983). Austin says how religion and science can complement each other. He means that though science and religion are different there are still ways where they can coexist and benefit from each other. Austin says how “they can learn from each other, as they appreciate their individuality, yet in a unique relationship” (987). Religion and science should also be able to accept that neither can do it all. Haught explains it by saying that “science should humbly concede that she is not the harbinger of all wisdom and knowledge. There are definitely some levels of knowledge that can sincerely be addressed by religion alone” (987). He then goes on to say that “religion must appreciate that science affect the way man views the world. Science is definitely a part of our daily life. This ranges from medicine to engineering and others” (987). It is important to recognize their differences but also recognize how they can work together to answer a question. This idea of recognizing differences, but still being able to coexist, is important because more people should have this mindset and maybe then we could have more peace in the world.

Authors Olav Hammer and James R. Lewis in their book, *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science*, understand that science and religion contrast each other, but they put emphasis on the importance of science and religion working together. The authors state that “science [is] an essential and integral part of its theology in that science and religion must work in unity and their common goals acknowledged...that of solving the ills of the world” (576). When their goals are recognized it will help solve important world issues. The common expression of ‘there is no I in team’ applies very nicely to this situation. That expression is a good way to think about the connection between science and religion. On a team there are multiple people with different ways of doing things, but all together they share one goal and that is to win. The authors, Hammer and Lewis, express how in science and religion “one is not superior to the other and both need the other for success” (576). This means that without religion science would not be as effective in explaining how something happens. Without science religion would have trouble expressing why something happened. These authors say how “the religion of the future cannot be a creed upon which the scientist must turn his back, because it is irreconcilable with the principles of science” (123). This means that in order for both science and religion to be relevant they will always need each other. A different way to think about that statement is that “religion must be in perfect accord with science” as explained by Hammer and Lewis. Though science and religion process things differently, they help enhance the meaning of each other. The author express their thoughts on this by saying that “science is divine, and the truth of science is a revelation of God. Through science God speaks to us; by science he shows us the glory of his works; and in science he teaches us his will” (123). It is very important to be able to recognize how science and religion differ but also understand how they complement each other.

Irina- Ana Drobot is one more author who expresses her ideas on the science and religion debate in *Reflecting on and Understanding the World: Between Science and Religion*. She states her opinion by saying how “science and religion, as ways of dealing with the world, with understanding and explaining it, have been regarded as ‘diametrically opposed’ (12). Her idea goes along with the other authors that science and religion contrast each other. To better understand this idea she then goes on to explain the differences. She says “the two use different methodologies: science, on the one hand, employs reason, empiricism, evidence, while religion, on the other hand, makes use of revelation, faith, sacredness”(12). Neither of these reasons is wrong because they can easily help each other solve a problem due to the individual approach they take. Another difference that should be recognized is that “when it comes to explaining how we get towards obtaining knowledge: for science, knowledge is obtained via reason, while for religion, it is obtained via faith” (12), and Drobot perfectly explain it. As mentioned before, science and religion are not entirely different in the sense that they can help solve a common issue. Drobot says that “both science and religion have in common the way humanity has used them to understand and explain the world in the course of history” (12). An example is when trying to understand the universe science and religion will come together to effectively answer a question from two different perspectives. A statement from Drobot on this issue is that “as science probes the universe, she encounters problems and questions which are philosophical in character and therefore cannot be resolved scientifically, but which can be illuminated by a theological perspective” (13). In the world today it will be very hard to live without both science and religion both working simultaneously. Drobot explains that “Religion, after all, [is] part of any culture and cannot be avoided throughout daily life” (13). Science and religion are all around us and we must embrace them.

Conclusion

Overall, science and religion contrast each other by having two different perspectives on how to solve society's issues more effectively. Science and religion share one common goal and that is to help humanity. Science and religion should be able to work hand in hand with each other. To recognize differences and coexist is very important to living a peaceful life. Only if more people recognize that being different does not mean they cannot work together.

Bibliography

- Austin, Omomia O. "Building a Consonance between Religion and Science: An Antidote for the Seeming Conflict." *European Researcher* 75.5-2 (2014): 980-989. Acc. on 1 Apr. 2016.
- Drobot, Irina-Ana. "Reflecting On And Understanding The World: Between Science And Religion." *Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies* 7.13 (2015): 11-15. Acc. on 3 Apr. 2016.
- Hammer, Olav, and James R. Lewis. *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science*. Leiden: Brill, 2011. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Acc. on 2 Apr. 2016.
- Haight, John F. *Science and Faith: A New Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 2012. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Acc. on 2 Apr. 2016.
- Myhre, Paul O., ed. *Introduction to Religious Studies*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2009.
- Rolston, Holmes. *Science & Religion: A Critical Survey*. Philadelphia: Templeton Press, 2006. *EBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Acc. on 3 Apr. 2016.