

science & God

The basic fact I think that forms the frame work of all of this is a simple observation on the history of science, that it exploded in the 16th and 17th centuries in Western Europe in a theistic context ... and the best summary of it is again C.S. Lewis: "Men became scientific because they expected law in nature and they expected law in nature because they believed in a Law Giver." So the basic stance is this – that far from belief in God being a hindrance for science, it was the motor that drove it.

JOHN
LENNOX

JOHN
POLKINGHORNE

I've had to think about how the scientific view of the world and the religious view of the world relate to each other. There are of course puzzles there but I've never felt a tension about it. I never felt this sort of crisis. It's always been both/and for me, rather than either/or.

When Newton discovered his law of gravitation he didn't say, 'Wonderful, now I've got a law and I can see how it works. I don't need God.' No, what he did was write the Principia Mathematica, one of the most famous books, in fact the most famous book in the history of science, hoping as he expressed in the flyleaf "that this book would persuade a thinking person to believe in God" because Newton didn't make the mistake of confusing law and mechanism on the one hand with agency on the other. ...If I said to you, 'Look, here's a Ford motor car, let's say a Galaxy. I got to give you two sets of explanations for it. Firstly, the law of internal combustion and mechanical engineering. Secondly, Henry Ford. Please choose between the two.'

JOHN
LENNOX

RICHARD
SWINBURNE

People have been over-influenced by the philosophers of Hume and Kant, overinfluenced by the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection which, to my mind is, irrelevant to whether or not there's a God. I think if there's a God he is responsible for the evolutionary process.

If somebody says, 'I am a scientist; I cannot be a Christian,' the reason why they make that statement is due to pre-theoretical ideas that they have, ideas that precede their science. The great thing about science is that you can actually do science with a lot of different ideas. In my own lab I have a Muslim, atheists, Jews, Hindus. The great thing is when we do science, it's the same. So science by and large is neutral on faith on average.

ARD
LOUIS

JOHN
LENNOX

The real battle or conflict, as I see it, is not between science and belief in God. It's between two worldviews. On the one hand you have the worldview of atheism, naturalism, materialism – this universe is all that exists. So explanation by definition has got to be exhaustively bottom up. Or the theistic worldview, the Christian worldview in my case and that is this universe is not all there is. There's a God who created and upholds it. Those worldviews are diametrically opposed. I imagine science sitting in the middle. Dawkins claims that you can deduce atheism from science. I claim that actually science points towards theism.

towards **belief**

JOHN
POLKINGHORNE

The Bible's always been very important to me in my spiritual life but part of my respect of the Bible is to figure out what kind of thing I'm reading, the genres people sometimes say. You can make terrible mistakes if you get that wrong ... So you've got to get it worked out. And the first three chapters of Genesis are not a divinely dictated account to save us the trouble of doing science and finding out about the history of the universe. There's something different and in my view deeper than that. They're theological rather than scientific in their character. Their purpose is to say...nothing exists except for the will of God.

There is something very deep intrinsically inside of us that's moral. If you assume what's called naturalism, there is no God, then you have to somehow explain why those moral instincts correlate with the true moral facts about the world. And that's a very difficult thing to do. I think people who don't believe in God, ie naturalists, need to come up with a much better explanation for why our moral sentiments correlate with moral reality... They haven't to my satisfaction done anything close to coming up with a good argument for why moral instincts correlate with moral reality.

ARD
LOUIS

SHARON
DIRCKX

The main memory for me was that sense of wonder of actually knowing the God who knows how those things work already and being a scientist is actually discovering the work that God has already laid out and made. Not only that but you can actually know the Person behind it.

Newton's faith in God, from the perspective of science, wasn't 'I can't explain it therefore God did it.' It was, 'Look, I can understand a bit of it. Look how marvelous it is! Doesn't that speak about the intelligence of the Creator who designed it?' And two seconds thought will show us that it's the more you understand of engineering, enables you the more to admire the genius of a Rolls Royce...

JOHN
LENNOX

JOHN
POLKINGHORNE

Science has purchased its great success essentially by the modesty of its ambition. It only seeks to answer one fundamental question about the world – how do things happen? What's the process of the world? Religion is concerned with asking another sort of question – the why questions, like is there something going on in what is happening? Is there meaning and value and purpose in the world? And science, when it's true to itself, has bracketed it out and you need both in science to understand what's going on. My favourite example is the homely one, natural to an Englishman, of a kettle boiling in the kitchen. I put on my scientific hat and I say the kettle's boiling because burning gas heats the water, et cetera, et cetera. I take it off. I say I want to make a cup of tea. Would you like to have one? I don't have to choose between those two answers. They're both true and in fact if I'm to understand the mysterious events of the boiling kettle, I need both answers. I need both the insights of science and the insights of religion.

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