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## **Religion and Science from a Postsecular Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

There are various ways in which religion and science have been perceived to interact in the cultural domain. After critically assessing the “separation view” of their relationship and finding it untenable, this essay recounts various “interaction views” wherein either religion or science is assumed to be taking precedence over or replacing in significance the other. This essay concludes with a “postsecular perspective” that sheds a different light on this relationship, claiming that discursively, religion and science inform and complement each other in American culture.

Keywords: postsecularism, religion, science, cultural domain, discourse

### **Introduction**

The postsecular turn in religious studies, an instantiation of postmodernism, has undoubtedly been made in academia. In very general terms, those making the turn acknowledge that the strict separation between the sacred and the secular that results in a hierarchy is no longer an accurate portrayal of the relationship between the secular and the sacred as viewed in contemporary culture. Depending on which scholar one reads, postsecularism represents the failure of secularization, an extension of the secular, a re-enchantment of culture, a resurgence of religion, or the harbinger of a new political reality (Beckford). Each representation may reach slightly different conclusions, some for ideological purposes, but common to all is the recognition that the secular has not made good on its promise to eliminate religion. Where does that leave the postsecular? It leaves it as more of an interpretative lens (or even a provocation to ask the right question, according

to de Vries: 2) through which to comprehend the complex relationship between the sacred and secular rather than a foundation according to which to relate the sacred and the secular. As such, the postsecular needs the raw material of discourse and practice to manifest itself through its hermeneutic agency. Ironically, perhaps, the “texts” that it interprets are operating as if the postsecular has yet to arrive. In other words, those who continue to put the sacred and the secular together if at all betray a “pre-postsecular” or modernist worldview wherein hierarchies hold. Yet as an interpretive lens that is reluctant to interfere with what it observes, the postsecular is critical of those discourses that continue to put the sacred and the secular in some kind of hierarchy. As suggested by the different ways that the postsecular has been construed so that the sacred can be resurgent, the secular can persist in a modified form; or for our purposes, the secular and sacred can be appropriately located on a cultural plane in order to be appreciated in their respective and mutually interrelated ways.

In this essay, we look at the relationship between religion and science as a prominent example of the secular and sacred coming together in contemporary American culture. In order to foreground the benefits of a postsecular interpretation of the relationship, we first articulate and dispense with the view that religion and science have nothing to do with each other because their respective objects of study and methods of inquiry are so radically different. Unlike previous attempts to historicize the relationship between the sacred and the secular (Taylor; Bellah), postsecular thought claims that they coexist; neither is overshadowing nor absorbing the other. This view follows our argument about the postsecular relationship between sports and religion where it becomes clear that their mutual reinforcement should be thought of as a form of displacement (as opposed to replacement): their independent existence is partially influenced by other cultural institutions instead of the one taking away or undermining the other (Scholes and Sassower 2014). This way of viewing the relationship highlights the postmodern “both/and” approach instead of the modernist “either/or” mindset that eschews one view or set of discourses in favor of another. The cultural prism through which we view this argument is colored by the pervasive capitalist ideology and reality in which both scientific and religious institutions and individuals must participate.

The lack of fruitful discussion in regards to the relationship between religion and science seems often enough to stem from oppositions over assumptions or assumed frameworks in need of preliminary clarification, as has been the case when Creationism confronts evolutionary theory (in classrooms, PTA meetings, or courtrooms). The best survey to date of the relationship between religion and science was undertaken by Ian Barbour. He identifies four kinds of relationships: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration, and we value and draw on his in-depth analysis and references. Since Barbour maintains a deferential attitude towards religion we, on the other hand, suggest that when religion and science are understood discursively (Foucault), deference to one or the other is neither possible nor fruitful from a postsecular perspective. That is, our postsecular interpretation attempts to expose the futility of constructing (ideological) silos, whether deferential or not. Different thinkers advocating any one of these silos seem to talk past each other insofar as their presuppositions are not made explicit. For example, perhaps one already assumes science has replaced religion, while another might consider religion and science equal partners. What underlies most of these attempts at constructing the

relationship is an assumption about scientific materialism and biblical literalism as if they were wholly contained in their respective silos. This, of course, leads to obvious ontological, metaphysical, and hermeneutical issues undergirding the different approaches endorsed in these views.

Religion and science, at first glance, may seem like odd bedfellows. Very few scientific papers investigate what the afterlife looks like and very few sermons from the pulpit describe how our immune system works. Yet when scientists claim to be able to describe all of reality or advocates of religion demand a say in the writing of science textbooks, it seems that one is encroaching on, perhaps hoping to overtake the other's discursive territory. Whether the argument is that one should intrude on the other or that the relationship between the two is inherently antagonistic, these arguments often presuppose that religion and science are like sports teams or countries at war – each has clearly defined boundaries so that terms like “encroachment” or “enemy” can be used in a literal sense. Religion and science, at a second, more careful glance, may not be able to be contained in neat packages with clear, distinct purposes and content that purportedly differentiates the two. J. Z. Smith asserts, “religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization” (xi). This is not to say that religious beliefs and practices have not been around for millennia; rather, this is a more technical and even political assertion that reflects the beginnings of religion becoming an object of study. With the onset of Religious Studies and the creation of religion as a practical and conceptual object, categories were also established that separated (perhaps artificially so) the world into two spheres: the religious and the secular; the sacred and the profane. The political issue at stake involves these very classifications: Who determines where the sacred ends and the profane begins? What gets classified where? Who has the power to relegate one practice into this or that domain? (Arnal and McCutcheon) In this sense, then, the very designation of “religious” remains contested so that when we talk about religion in this paper, we are cognizant of its history and plasticity, despite our consistent use of the term religion.

Likewise, one may argue that science itself is a historically-informed discourse, just like that concerning religion. There are numerous debates about the very definition, classification, methodology, and authority of science as well as its relation to technology and the capitalist system (Agassi). Some may argue that science, as a discourse that formulates its empirical findings in propositional form, does not quite undermine religion the way technology does as the primary mediator of religion in the West. It is the materiality of technology (or technoscience) rather than the more theoretical scientific discourse that puts the two – religion and technology – in a close relationship. Science, on the other hand, as a historically conditioned discourse would relate to religion, as a fellow discourse, more like sports, whose advocates have a better grasp of reality. The shift here is from relating essentialized categories of religion and science to relating their discursive practices (how they construct meaning). This shift also mirrors, and is no doubt influenced heavily by the shift from modernity to postmodernity as the postmodernist is now able to contextualize old universals, question binaries, and then correlate seemingly dissimilar discourses and practices, such as those under consideration here. Despite these postmodern moves, one need look no further than to recent debates over teaching Creationism in public schools to realize that debates between religion and science rage today as if lives depended on the

outcome. This kind of seriousness belies the relegation of both to mere discourses in a culture that does the same with religion and sports, for example, or market forces and religious institutions. Because religion and science claim to possess the ability to understand reality (either *in toto* or in part), the gravity that attends their interaction should not surprise us. It is for this reason that we find it critical to engage “religion” and “science” as broad-termed discourses at the level of culture even though we admit that there is nothing essentialist about our approach, nor do we endorse a particular view of these discourses over others. Religion and science will stay at the discursive level for us throughout this paper. Hence we concern ourselves with the meaning that each discourse generates and holds for its advocates when they are put into a relationship – a meaning that more often than not attempts to include the “Real” or provide an “Order” to the universe we inhabit.

For purposes of this paper, we define religion in broad terms as a set of beliefs and practices oriented towards a transcendence that guides a way of life and structures a worldview. More specifically, we refer primarily to a monotheistic-religious worldview that still pervades the West, as the lion’s share of work done on the relationship between religion and science has assumed a single divine creator. This choice is, of course, somewhat superficial and arbitrary but instrumental for our purposes. Similarly, we define science in the broadest terms as a set of ideas and theories whose legitimation depends on agreed-upon methods of inquiry, empirical testing, and problem solving that similarly structure a singular worldview. We are concerned with the discourse of science as it relates to the discourse of religion. Therefore, less important is the legitimacy of the findings of scientists over the centuries than the capacity of science to continue to approximate and order nature.

Specifically, we begin by examining and disposing of the view that religion and science have nothing to do with each other (understood in terms of separate silos or as the separation view). We next examine variants of the interaction view, from competition to complementarity to foundation, that describe the different practices of this relationship. We end by arguing how postsecular thinking does not seek to eliminate views that may betray secularism or even modernism because it can critically apprise them without needing to replace them. As such, the postsecular turn may not change the discursive animosity or pettiness displayed at times in contemporary culture, yet it may provide a more useful way with which to highlight the respective strengths both religious and scientific discourses bring to a culture thirsty for an ordered universe without having to necessarily favor one over the other.

### **The Untenable Separation View**

A separation account of the relation between religion and science views both as distinct and possessing equally legitimate methods of inquiry into understanding nature and humanity. Traced back to Francis Bacon’s original articulation of the scientific method and later rooted in modern views of knowledge based on reason, science employs an empirical method in its investigation of the natural world. Whether studying celestial bodies, atoms, heart function, breast cancer, or the environment, science offers the means of understanding physical reality, descriptions, and explanations of it that are open to confirmation (in the tradition of induction) or falsification (Popper). If descriptions and explanations are accepted

following testing, they serve as the bases of our understanding of and, perhaps, justification for intervening in the natural world.

Alternatively, theistic religion offers an understanding of nature and humanity based on divine revelation and its interpretation, often expressed in sacred texts and reinforced through the beliefs and practices of particular faith traditions. Whether investigating God, the soul, miracles, morality, or immortality, religion offers descriptions and explanations of metaphysical or spiritual existence that are open to confirmation by religious authorities in particular spiritual communities, whether they be one's own experience or that of another. If accepted, such descriptions and explanations serve likewise as the basis of our understanding of and, perhaps, the tools for intervention in the present and transcendent worlds. It should be noted here that unlike the scientific discourse, religious confirmation could be highly personal and subjective.

In a separation account of religion and science, the approaches employed by each are seen to be parallel or so distinct from each other that they hardly matter to the other. While the objects of inquiry and methods to understand them are different, they do not undermine each other. In fact, they are deemed independent enough to ignore each other completely. Where science studies the physical world and employs an empirical method to understand it, religion studies transcendent or metaphysical realities and employs a faith-based methodology to discern truth (Barbour: 78). Whereas scientific claims are open to change depending on empirical evidence, religious claims endure insofar as they are based on revelations consonant with sacred texts, teachings, and experience. This is not to say that scientists cannot appeal to faith and believers cannot appeal to reason in their understandings of the world. Indeed medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas encouraged scientific exploration of the world (Hannam), and the contemporary geneticist Francis Collins admits no conflict or cognitive dissonance between his scientific and evangelical Christian views. Separatists accept parallel, albeit differing, accounts of nature and humanity obtained via different methods of knowing, where "evidence" or "fact" means respectively something radically different.

In such parallel accounts, the difference between religious and scientific explanations is just that – a difference without hierarchy or as Stephen Jay Gould put it, "nonoverlapping magisteria," where "magisteria" are domains of discourse that provide appropriate methods for knowing. According to Gould, the magisteria reflect "a sound general consensus, established by a long struggle among people of goodwill in both magisteria" (70). But the inevitable incommensurability of these two discourses remains practically untenable. We all live in the same culture and as such hear the conflicting claims of religion and science: they may be separate conceptually or even in their respective approaches and practices, but their discursive pronouncements are shared in the cultural marketplace of ideas, where consumers of all walks of life encounter their differences as mutual challenges rather than unrelated sets of claims. In other words, the separation view is predicated on an ideal realm of science and an ideal realm of religion and therefore, they can be separated in an ideal world. In the real world, scientific discourse has always already been "infected" with a religious discourse and vice-versa as both discourses are reliant upon the cultural norms and forces, specifically that which capitalism generates, to express themselves. Indeed, the postsecular perspective accounts for culture, which means that it brooks no such separation between any sets of

discourses, be it religion and science or other sets. It is to alternative, interaction views that are more realistic in a postsecular world that we now turn.

### Interaction Views of the Relationship between Religion and Science

If the separation view can be rejected because of the so-called silos into which religion and science are relegated without having to deal with each other, the views that honor their interaction hold the potential for compliance to the postsecular. We highlight three types of interactions between religion and science. One type is competition, where each discourse attempts to win the hearts and minds of the public in a way that discredits the inferior discourse. The second type is complementarity, where the two discourses are not competing but complementing each other (different from the separation view that suggests the two completely ignore each other). And the third type is foundation (or *homo religiosus*), where a religious mindset is attributed to human nature as a fundamental feature of humanity. These variants incorporate at least three admissions: they admit that the two discourses are in a relationship; they admit, albeit implicitly at times, that the one is superior to the other (the choice differs depending on the perspective); and they admit that there is also a discursive hierarchy according to which they are culturally positioned. Though the postsecular perspective acknowledges the first admission (that there are two discourses at play in our culture), it resists the second two admissions because it offers an alternative way to look at discursive differences that are always already at play with each other, informing each other one day, critically responding the next, while all along realizing that neither discourse is going to vanish into thin air. Put differently, unlike the power moves displayed in the standard views, the postsecularist refuses all permanent hierarchies, acknowledging that one discourse may be more fruitful in this or that context but never is able to gain permanent ascendancy.

First, the competition view of the relationship between science and religion is both historically informed – citing the ascendancy of one of these discourses over the other at particular epochs – and anchored in a deep concern for epistemological veracity. As the name “competition” suggests, one will win out. At some historical juncture, so claims this view, science (reason) began to replace religion (revelation) as *the* authoritative explanatory view of the universe. Giving full credit to the power of religious institutions that have provided comprehensive descriptions and explanations of the world for most of human history, this view relies on the history of authoritative views. For example, while it made sense to argue that God created and positioned the earth at the center of the universe and put humans in charge of his creation, more recent discoveries have superseded and replaced this view. It is not simply a matter of choice of whether we accept the religious or the scientific explanation today but rather that history has unfolded in a way that makes one explanation far more credible than the other. Along the lines of secularization theory, credibility is no longer built along the lines of religious criteria – divine power or one’s own faith and conviction as couched in theological terms – but is instead constructed in empirical and logical terms.

A strong variant of this view demands the complete subservience of the religious perspective on reality in the face of the emerging scientific one. Religious explanations are not simply to be supplanted, displaced, or ignored; they should not be regarded as having any value whatsoever when discussing the nature of an ordered reality, as everything that we

know about reality is given by the phenomena that one observes and with which one interacts. Religious ideas are deemed historically, yet naively relevant, but fundamentally superstitious, figments of the imagination, and therefore dangerous in derailing human knowledge on its path to the truth. The danger is highlighted when religious zealots discredit scientifically proven ideas and ensure that young disciples continually mistrust science (as is the case with some extreme orthodox communities) because it will corrupt them. Copernicus' discovery of a heliocentric solar system and Charles Darwin's evolution theory of 1859 stand as perhaps the biggest perceived threats to those wishing to discredit science in order to maintain religious authority.

With the understanding that the earth was not the center of the universe, much less our own small solar system, and that random mutations are the source of evolutionary change in species, the uniqueness of humanity as God's special creation received a devastating blow, according to this view. Divine intervention is superfluous, and any prefigured design of a predetermined trajectory unnecessary in light of these two discoveries. Drawing on the implications of these and other scientific developments, Friedrich Nietzsche's proposal that "God is dead" in 1881 and the Logical Positivists' claim in the 1920s that all metaphysical propositions have no role to play in the human understanding of the universe, the replacement of religion by science has moved into the wider culture by the twentieth-first century. The "new atheists," such as Richard Dawkins, add a moralizing warning against anything religious as the "God delusion." For them, all moral statements that appeal to religion are misplaced and bound to unravel once fully examined. Alternatively, the persistence of human morality, as argued by the likes of Edward O. Wilson, Martin A. Nowak, and Sam Harris, is given a scientific grounding. For them, the evolutionary record provides a robust explanation for multi-level evolution that, at times, fosters competitive self-interest at the individual level of natural selection and, at others, collaborative action of species groups to fend off other predator species. This process eventually selects for human traits that include both tendencies and thus allows for the development of diverse moral systems at the individual, social, or political level over time.

From the postsecular view, the competitive view of the relation between religion and science is misguided because it suggests that either discourse is correct but not both. This necessitates a replacement of one discourse with the other instead of realizing that when a displacement takes place, both remain intact. A recent example of displacement occurring in American culture involves the response to Hurricane Katrina in southern Louisiana in 2005. On the scientific level, the Army Core of Engineers was called in to strengthen and heighten the levees to prevent future flooding. Technoscientific expertise was crucial to this project, but it was limited in satisfying other dire needs of the flood victims. Local churches stepped in to provide spiritual and material help before FEMA could respond appropriately. Here, religion is displaced (Pat Robertson's analysis aside) by science in one area while science is displaced by religion in another. Both remain intact and mutually reinforce each other without one taking all the credit for the recovery.

Despite Barbour's statement that "[t]he image of warfare [between religion and science] is common today" and the difference between scientific materialism and religious literalism (77-78), and despite the convenience of having a singular view of an ordered universe (once one discourse gains full ascendancy over the other), the postsecularist would resist such

statements. Perhaps there is a presumed rivalry on a superficial media-attention-grabbing level, but at a deeper cultural level of discursive analysis the two discourses coexists in relative calm.

The second variant of the interactive view is one of complementarity of the relationship between the scientific and religious discourses, and sees both as needing each other in order to provide a more accurate and holistic picture of reality. This is not to say that when the respective insights of these discourses contribute to this picture that all of reality will be elucidated, as Barbour correctly asserts (105). Nor does this variant exclude other domains of knowledge and experience from participating in this process of elucidation. Though it admits that these discourses bring different ways of understanding the universe to the table, it insists that neither can explain nor illuminate all of reality on its own. Therefore they need each other. Some sort of cooperation is the cultural key with which to unlock their seemingly mysterious complementarity, one with a long genealogy.

Early Christian theologians, drawing on issues already raised by the ancient Greek philosophers, wrestled with how faith and reason, earlier analogs of the terms religion and science used here, are to interact. Are they truly separate faculties with one putting the individual in relation to the divine and the other merely clarifying things of the fleshly, material world? Or instead, is faith unable to illuminate the way the world (or God's creation) works and therefore it needs another faculty to complete the circle? In the fourth century, Augustine wrote, "I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe." Here, as in Thomas Aquinas' vast elaboration on the subject, both reason and faith come from God and are hence necessary and useful, though each performs different duties. In Catholic thought (Luther denigrated the efficacy of reason when compared to faith), reason that uses empirical data to make connections not only reveals its own limits when attempting to rationalize the supernatural, but it also is needed to ground faith, which deals exclusively with the supernatural. In this way, faith alone is inadequate to guard against unjustified belief and superstition, but reason alone is inadequate to describe and make sense of experiences that transcend the machinery of the natural world.

When translated into religion and science, some of the Catholic principles that guide the faith/reason dynamic still apply, though with qualification. With the rise of modern science occurring long after Aquinas articulated his synthesis, most often the findings of scientists, using reason to understand empirical evidence, are given tremendous authority and only when they reach limits, does religion step in to transcend these limits. For instance, astrophysicists are able to trace the history of the universe back to a Big Bang, but none have been able to explain its initial cause and as such remain silent on the subject. Or the attempt to unify theories of general relativity and quantum mechanics into a "Theory of Everything" that could generate fundamental rules of reality again begs the question, does the natural world alone evince fundamental principles, and if not, is not the supernatural needed to talk about fundamentals? In addition, do large gaps in the fossil record that problematize an uninterrupted, comprehensive flow of evolution necessarily lead some to interject God (a "God of the gaps") into those gaps as the needed facilitator of evolution?

Many scientists cringe at the suggestion of the limits of the scientific method which religion is often called on to surpass. If science has yet to explain all of reality, it is merely a

matter of time, so many scientists argue. An undiscovered fundamental principle of physical reality or holes in an otherwise efficacious theory should never prompt one to look outside the natural world for a complement. Likewise, more fervent religious adherents argue for the sufficiency of faith to understand all of reality, though in the face of the authority of science, this position is difficult to maintain. Therefore, the complementarity view is typically employed by advocates of religion wishing to use the claim that science has limits to reintroduce a God/creator as a necessary supplement to what science has accomplished.

A postsecular perspective endorses this approach to the pursuit of epistemological comprehensiveness and appreciates the modesty that necessarily must accompany any discourse. With the complementarity view, both discourses are seen as plastic and protean which complement each other to varying degrees without claiming full compatibility between them. What is welcomed in this more pliable view of the relationship between the scientific and religious discourses is that the specter of ascendancy or superiority is vanquished; the continuous coexistence of these discourses is a tribute to their respective validity; and the cultural plane on which both discourses operate and interact with each other is taken much more seriously.

The third variant of the interaction view, the foundation or *homo religious* view, begins with the idea that human beings are innately religious. If human beings are, in a sense, hard-wired to be religious, then religion cannot be separated from the past, present, or near future of human beings. First articulated by Mircea Eliade who wrote about the undeniable human need for an experience of the sacred, this view assumes that a religious lens used to understand the world is *a priori* or at least prior to a Baconian or any other scientific worldview. Two implications for the relationship between religion and science flow from this and they differ from the competition and complementarity variants covered above. One, religion, however disdainful to some who are scientifically inclined, cannot be conveniently distilled out and excised from the human experience; therefore, claims of its irrational, dangerous, and especially misanthropic effects are severely undermined. Two, if it is primarily evolutionary biologists that are providing the data that demonstrate this view, traditional ways of explaining and/or justifying religious belief and practice are similarly undermined. Hence if religion is insistent on gaining its legitimacy from divine revelation or transcendent truth, then science may be offering an alternate source of religion that, perhaps ironically, replaces the long-established sources of religion. The *homo religious*, then, puts the religious and scientific discourses into an unexpected and complex relationship – one that is mutually reinforcing with extensive overlap yet potentially antagonistic at the same time.

The scientific point of view given by those who argue that the existence of religion can be explained by evolution can be broken down into two general camps. The first group, represented most prominently by anthropologist Maurice Bloch, claims that religion is a by-product of other brain functions that were needed to survive. In other words, religion did not develop as a needed adaptation on its own but flowed from established neural architecture that allowed for thinking about things that were not immediately present to our five senses. The second group, of which Robert Bellah and Barbara J. King are a part, argues that religion grew in response to a direct need, such as building social solidarity to increase the probability of survival and reproduction. This group positions religion as a more essential facet of human life than the first group in that religious expressions are less of a

haphazard by-product and more of a crucial instrument that ensures the existence of humanity.

Both groups contend that humans are innately religious on a genetic basis. Bearing more on the relationship between religion and science is the contention that for the *homo religiosus*, religious tendencies precede and even mold other, later means of understanding the world, including the scientific. Whether it is the imagination that is necessary for theoretical physicists to hypothesize or the belief required to trust the outcome of a yet-to-be-determined experiment, defenders of this view classify these aspects of science as reliant upon unseen, unproven things or on that which our religious nature provides. Moreover, instead of each discourse claiming to grasp reality either in conjunction or separately, the view of the innate religiousness of humanity disarms both discourses from any potential rivalry and shows a more specific way of their complementarity, though a foundational one. This variant of the relationship of religion and science also explains the fundamental motivation for and the eventual development of science over time (Fuller).

A postsecular perspective on the third variant of the relationship between the two discourses helps explain several perplexing realities in ways that other views cannot. Religion persists today after the secularization in the West over the last three centuries because, no matter how successful science has been, the religious impulse has always and will always be in us. As such, this view can be utilized by both the religious person and the scientist to support respective worldviews without having to destroy each other. If religion is innate, perhaps it reveals the image of God in all of us, so some theists could say. If religion is innate because of its advantageous properties that helped humans to succeed in the “survival of the fittest,” then it is science that has provided the evidence, not the Bible or divine revelation. While there are biologists who honor the *homo religiosus* view in a way that obviates the need for traditional religious sources, the religious worldview is far from being rejected. Unfortunately, we must admit that religious fanaticism and militant atheism seem to escape the religion promoted by those upholding this view.

### The Postsecular Perspective

As the argument of this paper has illustrated so far, there are various ways in which religion and science have been perceived to interact in the cultural domain. Understood discursively – that is, neither in terms of the deep beliefs held by these respective practices nor in terms of specific institutional doctrines and structures – the postsecular perspective sheds a different light on this relationship. Religion and science are seen as using each other’s rhetoric and methodology and as such display neither separation between nor replacement of each other. Similar to what postmodernism claims about any two or more sets of discourses (in Lyotard’s sense) or practices (in Foucault’s sense), religion and science, in the broadest terms that have been discussed here, in fact cannot claim superiority over the other in any real sense. Hence they draw strength from each other and feed off the discursive moves either of them makes in response to historical contingencies. For example, conceptual binaries, such as faith and reason, fact and value, knowledge and belief can be found in both, even when deployed differently. That is to say that the reliance on faith is not exclusively the purview of religionists who, in the tradition of Soren Kierkegaard, implore a “leap of faith,” but can be found daily by scientists who have faith in their instruments and their

functionality, their colleagues, the reliability of their hypotheses, and the overall ethos of the scientific enterprise (Merton). Faith may mean something different here than it does in religion, but the very notion and its function in both indicates certain parallels and even a similarity between usages.

Likewise, the suggestion that religious doctrine is devoid of any reason is spurious and false, as reasoning is the basic method deployed by theologians and religious scholars with rigor and commitment to logic no less than by scientists. Facts are disputed and examined in both discourses and render both, however differently, partially factual and partially speculative. Scientific hypotheses are offered routinely before any empirical basis for them has been established just as scientific facts and the logic that arrived at them are needed by theologians as boundaries beyond which belief may be justified. Any and all conceptual terms used in one discourse can be easily found in the other, regardless of variation in meaning and application. That concepts typically thought of as existing only in one domain can be appropriated in another domain is not simply a linguistic move: the interpenetration of these concepts between religion and science gestures towards epistemological relationship between the two as well.

For instance, when Albert Einstein is quoted as saying “God does not play dice with the universe,” there is no suggestion that he is speaking religiously or that he no longer speaks as a scientist. Nor is there a suggestion that the allusion to God is accidental, out of character, or improper, against one who may say either you are a scientist or a religionist, but you cannot be both! Instead, this is an example of the linguistic and epistemological fluidity that informs both discourses and the ease with which one uses terms and ideas from the other. Thomas Henry Huxley who already in 1893 was reconsidering the implications of Darwin’s evolution theory argued that if science were to rest metaphysically on a view of temporary and unorganized materiality of humans and the universe, it would not look like what we currently observe. In other words, the very impetus of the scientific enterprise rests on a metaphysical view of an ordered universe, a universe whose divine design allows for humans to study it and even improve on it (Fuller: 23). A more recent example of such usage is found in describing or labeling the Higgs Boson particle found in 2013 as “The God Particle.” Scratching the linguistic surface one learns that in the case of science, the debate is over a deterministic versus a random interpretation of the movements of subatomic particles or celestial bodies, to put it simply. If all phenomena are at a very basic level deterministic in the sense that every effect must have a cause (even if many), it makes sense to search for natural laws that described subatomic and astronomical behavior.

The non-hierarchical plurality that postsecularism pushes is no mere “anything goes” (Feyerabend) in a relativist sense (without rational criteria for choice) or in a pragmatic sense (choices are made *ad hoc* in terms of what works best now). Instead, this approach is informed by cultural practices that are rhetorical and applied as well as contextualized within particular frameworks within which one can easily make a logical choice between contesting ideas and views. For example, if all medical interventions are proven futile, prayer and hope might elevate a patient’s spirit and induce an improvement in the immune system that may lead to partial or full recovery. Likewise, many religious claims about sacred texts can be scientifically tested (dating scrolls, finding linguistic markers to attribute authorship) rather

than appealing to the authority of tradition. Though different, such examples amplify the postsecular appeal to mutually informed parallel discourses.

One could argue that the postsecular perspective too conveniently glosses over the fundamental differences that inform religion and science. Moreover, this oversight is dangerous, according to critics, because it provides the illusion that they share enough common (ontological and epistemological) ground to keep them on par with each other. We wonder, then, wherein lies the danger? If we remain curious about multiple discourses and their potential contributions to our knowledge, and if we are willing to learn from each other without feeling threatened with damaging criticism or worse, eradication, then mutual ignorance is pointless and futile. Agreeing that at times both discourses refer to the same aspects of reality allows for intellectual richness; agreeing that at times they refer to different parts of reality allows for a greater overall knowledge of reality as a whole; and agreeing that each has strengths over the other as well as blind spots where its respective view falls short is not an admission of failure but rather of maturity. It is for all these reasons that we find these attitudes more prevalent in contemporary cultures where science is celebrated and religion revered.

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