On Not Leaving Your Brain at the Church House Door: Religion on Which the Devout and Skeptic Can Agree

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Abstract

This paper attempts to articulate a set of religious ideas that could potentially be held in common between the devout religionist and the scientific skeptic. The goal is to identify a set of religious notions that preserve the compelling texture of traditional belief systems without unduly straining rational sensibility. To achieve this aim the paper goes through the following logical steps: (1) it defends the value of this endeavor by arguing that in both the history of science and religion progress has been made by synthesis, and this challenge is another example of the need for synthesis, (2) it identifies the definition of religion as a key issue for the success or failure of synthesis, (3) it identifies compromises that both devout religionists and scientific skeptics must make if synthesis is to be successful.

Biography

Matt Rossano earned his BA and MA degrees in Psychology from the University of Dayton in Dayton OH, in 1984 and 1986 respectively. He earned a Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology in 1991 from the University of California at Riverside. He is currently Professor of Psychology at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. Matt has broad scholarly interests having published articles on spatial cognition, artificial intelligence and ethics, the evolution of consciousness, and a textbook on Evolutionary Psychology. He lives with his wife and many daughters in the small town of Independence Louisiana and invites everyone down to the annual Italian Festival held there every year on last weekend in April.

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Cornell biologist William Provine is well known for his assertion that people must "check their brains at the church house door" in order to subscribe to religion. In his view, the empirical nature of science is wholly incompatible with the devotional acceptance that characterizes religious belief. The fact that the majority of scientists are not religious would tend to support this incompatibility. With effort though one can find evidence to the contrary. More than one Noble caliber scientist (John Eccles and Charles Townes, for example) have been counted among the devout. Furthermore, science itself rests on the unprovable proposition that the universe is, in fact, orderly and that the scientific method is the best way to uncover that order. This "belief" is essential to science and to the work of all scientists. These observations suggests that there may be some overlap between science and religion, possibly enough on which to build a synthesis acceptable to the devout and skeptic alike. The following paper attempts just such a synthesis. While this paper does not claim to have entirely accomplished such a lofty goal, it does strive to be a substantive step in a positive direction.

Synthesis: Why Bother?

Is a science/religion synthesis even possible? If the fundamental difference between the skeptic and the devout is faith – an acceptance of the unproven – then one might contend that this is already an unbridgeable divide. The devout have faith and the skeptics do not. This is a dichotomous difference, not a quantitative one. Therefore there is no "average" between them – no common value the two can share.

This assessment may be true for the extremes on both sides of the divide. Richard Dawkins and Duane Gish may find nothing on which they can agree other than their deep

commitment to disagree with one another. However, most scientists and most religionists are not members of the Dawkins and Gish camps. The dichotomy may not be as impenetrable for them, nor even necessarily a dichotomy at all. Most religious people, and most religions for that matter, place a high value on reason. Religious faith is typically not blind faith. Furthermore, as already mentioned a "faith" of sorts is a necessary prerequisite of any science. Still, the scientific skeptic may rightly hesitate, sensing that the "faith" being ascribed to him or her hardly seems cut from the same cloth as that of the "faithful." One may not be able to prove the orderliness of the universe in the strictest Aristotelian sense but the track record of the universe is pretty good in that regard. Likewise one may not be able to show definitively that the scientific method is the best method for uncovering that assumed order but it has worked awfully well for number of centuries now. Believing that the sun will come up tomorrow based on past evidence does not seem quite the leap of faith that believing in God is. A solid enough point such that most scientists would rather refer to their "belief" in order as more a "confidence" based on past evidence rather than a "faith" in the same category as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thus, the challenge laid before us is that of trying to divine what one might confidently, reasonably belief in. Religionists want to believe in something compelling, inspiring, and life-changing; skeptics (if they desire any belief at all) want something rational and reliable, which serves to promote, not stifle, human inquiry. For any successful synthesis the religionist must be willing to move somewhat in the skeptic's direction, making his/her faith more compatible with reason and evidence. Likewise, the skeptic must be willing to move somewhat in the devout's direction acknowledging that

humans often experience the world as morally inspiring, and that science is only of limited value in helping us to understand the full depth of that experience. A serious challenge is arrayed before us, but not an insurmountable one for those motivated to take up the cause.

Historical Examples of Successful Synthesis

There is a further reason for taking up the cause of synthesis. History shows that in both science and religion progress is often obtain through synthesis. A few examples will help to build the case – first, in science.

Science

Darwin's original genius was not in discovering evolution. Evolutionary ideas were circulating about in scientific circles at least a century prior to Darwin. Darwin's (and Wallace's) great contribution was that of the mechanism by which evolution operated, natural selection. Natural selection rested on the notion of inherited variance among phenotypes and the differential reproductive success of those phenotypes as they interacted with the environment. Though Darwin presented a convincing case for natural selection, a key element was missing – that of the means by which inherited variance was passed along from parent to offspring. Darwin knew nothing of Mendelian genetics. This shortcoming hampered progress in evolutionary theory for many decades after Darwin's original proposal. When Mendel's work was rediscovered early in the 20th century it was initially interpreted as being incompatible with Darwinian evolution. It took the insights of scientists such as Fisher, Sewell, and others to demonstrate how the mechanics of Mendelian genetics operated within the framework of natural selection. The successful

synthesis of Darwinism and Mendelian genetics (neo-Darwinism, or the Modern Synthesis) has been the bedrock of the modern success of evolutionary theory.

In more recent decades synthesis in evolutionary biology has become a growth industry. In 1975, E.O. Wilson published his landmark *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis.* In it he proposed that evolutionary principles extended not only to the structural adaptations observable in most animals (e.g. a monkey's tail or a moose's antlers) but to their social behavior as well. In recent years psychology has extended this range even farther, eagerly embracing evolution as a basis for the mental and social aspects of human nature under the rubric of evolutionary psychology. In these developments we see constructive connections being created across disciplines (psychology and biology, for example) which had until now been largely separate from each other.

A similar synthetic movement has been driving decades of work in physics. The GUT (grand unified theory of everything) in physics seeks to find a synthesis among the four fundamental forces of the universe: gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. Already evidence indicates that the weak nuclear force and electromagnetism may be one in the same (the electroweak force). Currently great effort is being expended to unify the electroweak force with the strong force, leaving only gravity outstanding. Success in this effort would necessarily mean that an even greater synthesis would have been achieved, that of uniting the laws of quantum physics with those operating at the macro level.

In these developments one can see that much of the progress that drives science is in the form of synthesis. This may well be the case because often different disciplines are addressing similar issues from independent perspectives. These independent perspectives

allow them to uncover certain principles that are not obvious from other perspectives. For example, Darwin could see that offspring varied and that those variations could be advantageous or disadvantageous depending on the environment. Mendel could see that offspring varied as well, but his focus was on the algorithm producing those variations. It was not until decades later that other scientists recognized that both Darwin and Mendel were actually dealing with the same issue of inheritance and that the principles they uncovered were in fact related. Synthesis is often most successful under these circumstances where independent perspectives provide related information on the same general phenomenon. As with science, Christianity has seen a similar process in its history.

Religion

Examples of progress through synthesis are also apparent in the long history of Christianity. A forceful proponent of synthesis can be found in the person of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). In his voluminous writings (especially *Confessions*) Augustine championed integration between Neo-Platonic philosophy and Christian theology. In the Platonists, Augustine found an understanding of God and God's relationship to the world that made sense to his philosophical mind. In the scriptures he found a compelling image of love and sacrifice in the person of Jesus that motivated him to a life of contemplative monasticism (see Arieti & Wilson, 2003; and *Confessions* 7, 20-21). Augustine's enthusiasm for the integration of pagan philosophy with Christian theology, however, was not shared by all of the early Church Fathers. Tertullian, most notably, was one who viewed pagan philosophy with utter contempt: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church? … We have no need for curiosity since Jesus Christ, nor

for inquiry since the Evangel" (*De Praescrpitione Haereticorum, 7* from Cochrane, 1940, p. 222-223).

Eight and half centuries later the issue was not Christianity and Neo-Platonism, but Christianity and Aristotelianism; and the major player was not Augustine but Thomas Aquinas. In a flurry of intellectual productivity that lasted only about two short decades, Aquinas achieved a monumental synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. For Aquinas the notion of double truth (one derived from philosophy another from theology) was anathema. Correctly understood, Aristotle's rigorous logic, though incomplete, complemented, rather than contradicted, revelation. In due time Aquinas's achievement would be properly recognized as a bold and ingenious step in the centuries' long development of Christian thinking, but in its immediate aftermath it was harshly critiqued. Powerful figures in the Catholic Church decried Thomism as a pagan pollution on sacred scripture. On March 7, 1277, only three years (to the day) after Thomas's death, Bishop Tempier of Paris issued a condemnation of many of Thomas's teachings. A similar condemnation was issued only eleven days later by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Roger Kilwardby. In 1286 upon his succession as Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham reiterated Kilwardby's condemnations of Thomism and pronounced key elements of it as heretical, carrying the force of excommunication unto those who adhered to them.

These historical events carry important lessons. First, Christianity (and religion more generally) has a long history of confronting controversy over the integration of "pagan" knowledge with the accepted canons of faith. Secondly, when facing these controversies rival camps often form with one side strongly advocating synthesis (e.g.

Augustine and Aquinas) and the other strongly advocated separation (e.g. Tertullian, Tempier, Kilwardby, etc.). Third, history tends to celebrate the successful synthesizers and forget segregationists. Augustine and Aquinas are revered doctors of the Christian Church and familiar to even the most causal observers of religion. Tertullian, Tempier and their comrades are more likely remembered by agnostic philosophers and historians than average Christians. In principle the challenge that science poses to religion is no different than what confronted Augustine and Aquinas in the past – what to do with pagan knowledge? As in the past, camps are arrayed on either side with arguments for separation (e.g. Gould, 1999) and integration (e.g. Haught, 2003; Miller, 1999) being posed. (There also appears to be a camp of "deniers" or "eliminativists" who seek to argue the other side away such as Dawkins, 1998, Johnson, 1991, and Dembski, 1998. They are not of concern here).

Thus the argument for synthesis can be succinctly stated: the modest faith (or confidence) required for good science and the rationality required for good religion provide a starting point for a synthetic program and both the history of science and religion reinforce the lesson that synthesis often promotes progress. Furthermore, for religion especially, the challenge of a deeper integration with science holds the promise of theological advances similar to those achieved in the past when Christianity confronted Platonism and Aristotelianism.

Defining Religion

Attempts at synthesis often require one to look critically at how important terms are defined. Aquinas's teachings were, in part, condemned because of his willingness to accept the Aristotelian definition of man as a unity of soul and body, rather than the more

Platonic/Augustinian definition of a soul trapped within a body (Wipple, 1977). This definition of man allowed for a productive integration of Aristotelianism and Christianity, but it had some challenging implications as well. The same struggles and challenges over definitions confront us if we wish to find a productive synthesis of science and religion. The success of any integration between science and religion turns critically on how one defines "religion." A certain class of definitions almost immediately rules out or severely limits synthesis. I shall call this class of definitions the "reaching down" definitions. As an example take the definition of religion as proposed by Bruce (2002 p.2):

> beliefs, actions, and institutions predicated on the existence of entities with powers of agency (that is, gods) or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose (the Hindu notion of Karma, for example) which can set the conditions of, or intervene in, human affairs.

Or the definition used by Stark (1999 p.270): "Religion consists of very general explanations that justify and specify the terms of exchange with a god or gods." In both of these definitions there is the assumption of a supernatural world that can "reach down" and affect human affairs. From this perspective, a central focus of religion involves the rituals and practices that human engage in for the purpose of influencing how the supernatural world intervenes in human affairs. For example, if the gods control the forces of the wind or weather, humans may offer a sacrifice or perform a ritual before setting sail in order to help ensure favorable conditions for the journey. The supernatural world is assumed to reach down and affect us, so we perform some religious-based action

(ritual, sacrifice, etc.) that serves to maintain or reestablish its favorable influence. There is nothing necessarily "wrong" with defining religion in this way. It certainly captures what has been (and arguably continues to be) an important feature of religion. The limitation of any "reaching down" definition is that it directly, and perhaps unnecessarily, conflicts with a scientific view of the world. Modern science severely undermines the notion of a supernatural world directing or affecting natural processes.

A second class of definitions I will call the "reaching up" definitions. These definitions are not only more congenial to a scientific world view, but also appear to be more common among scientifically minded religious thinkers. Take, for example, the definition of religion proposed by William James (1902, p. 53): "Religion, in the broadest and most general terms possible,…consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto." Or a bit of a more wordy definition offered by Alfred North Whitehead (1925, p. 92):

> Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal and the hopeless quest.

Finally, consider the definition of Emile Durkheim (1912, p. 44): "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and

forbidden – beliefs and practices that unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." In each of these definitions one finds reference to something transcendent, in other words, something mysterious that humans sense but cannot fully grasp rationally. For James it is an "unseen order." For Whitehead it is a "vision of something that stands beyond," and for Durkheim it is "sacred things." These definitions reflect what I refer to as humans "reaching up" for something transcendent, though not necessarily something supernatural. Note also how each of these definitions implies a certain response to the transcendent: For James it is "harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto"; for Whitehead it is "the hopeless quest [to possess] the final good [which is] beyond all reach"; and finally for Durkheim it is "practices that unite into one single moral community called a Church."

In these definitions we are presented with an image of humans sensing, though not fully comprehending, something transcendent and responding to it by transforming the manner in which they live their lives. "Reaching up" definitions not only present less of a conflict with a scientific world view, but may in fact, find support from it. While science has undermined the credibility of an effectual supernatural world "above" us, it has revealed an amazingly vast and almost incomprehensibly elegant universe stretching immeasurably beyond us (Green, 1998). With this in mind I will now offer a version of a "reaching up" definition that I will defend as potentially being acceptable to both the devout religionist and the scientific skeptic. It is as follows: *Religion is our response to the realization that there is something greater than humanity in the universe, which inspires us to live lives of greater compassion, self-restraint, and service*. I will unpack the concepts contained within this definition and attempt to show how it attempts to

retain the compelling texture of traditional faith (necessary for the devout) without unduly compromising rationality (necessary for the skeptic).

Unpacking the Definition

Something Greater

The notion of "something greater" than humanity is intended to be open-ended. For the devout this is, of course, God. Yet even among them, a diversity of views is present. Different monotheistic traditions (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) do not necessarily envision God in the same way. Other theists may depart even further envisioning something more akin to a Platonic Form (of the Good, perhaps), an Aristotelian prime mover, or possibly an even deeper abstraction such as James's "unseen order." The "something greater" of the current definition is meant to allow for all these (and maybe even other) possibilities. Among the skeptics, of course, none of these religious notions of "something greater" are likely to be very appealing. For them, this concept may simply be nature itself or the laws of physics. This "natural" form of the something greater need not be any less impressive or inspiring than the more supernaturalistic ones of the theists. The incomprehensible magnitude of our universe, the improbable fortuitiveness of nature's laws for the existence of life, and the incredulity thrust upon us by quantum indeterminacy and duality all stretch our imagination in ways that the supernatural worlds envisioned by our ancestors could never approach. In short, religious wonder may no longer need supernaturalism. An often-cited example of this was expressed by Albert Einstein as he contemplated the amazing orderliness of the universe.

> …everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble." (cited in Dukas & Hoffman, 1979, p.32-33).

More recently this same sense of "Einsteinian awe" has been expressed by complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman: "We latter-day players are heritors of almost four billion years of biological unfolding. If profound participation in such a process is not worthy of awe and respect, if it is not sacred, then what might be?" (1995; p. 303). And most passionately by biologist Ursula Goodenough,

> "I lie on my back under the stars and the unseen galaxies and I let their enormity wash over me…I take in the abstractions about forces and symmetries and they caress me, like Gregorian chants, the meaning of the words not mattering because the words are so haunting. Mystery generates wonder, and wonder generates awe. The gasp can terrify or the gasp can emancipate. As I allow myself to experience cosmic and quantum Mystery, I join the saints and the visionaries in their experience of what they call the Divine,.." (1998, p.12-13).

The important point here is that the encounter that thoughtful nontheists have with scientifically revealed nature is in many respects similar to the devout's encounter with God. Though the two groups may not articulate this "something greater" in the same way, the diversity of meanings between them is probably no more varied than what is found

among different-striped theists. Thus, there may indeed be enough common ground here on which to begin some bridge building.

As a conceptual bridge between the devout and the skeptic I propose a notion forwarded nearly a century ago by theologian Rudolf Otto: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*[1] (Otto, 1923). Otto used this phrase to describe the experience of God, but it seems equally well suited to the scientist's experience of "Einsteinian awe." For Otto the experience of the Divine was characterized by three aspects: (1) rational incomprehensibility and inexpressibility (mystery), overwhelming power and awful (meaning awe-inspiring) presence (tremendum) and, (3) a simultaneous reaction of fear and irresistible attraction (facinans). To the devout, God is a collosal force capable of both mighty creation and destruction, on which humans are both frightfully dependent and lovingly secured. To the skeptic, the laws of physics and the great epic of evolution are at once the origins of all life, complexity, and beauty, as well as incalculable suffering, extinction, and waste. Both the devout and the skeptic are overpoweringly attracted to the grand, yet terrible and paradoxical majesty of this "something greater."

Religious Response

The proposed definition of religion says that religion is a *response* to the "something greater." Thus, it is not enough to simply encounter the divine or to have a religious experience of nature. One must respond to that event. Since the response is in reaction to something external to the individual, I contend it is therefore truly religious. Note how all the definitions of religion discussed earlier (including the currently proposed one) make reference to something external to humans as a motivating force for human behavior. This contrasts with exclusively human-derived ideologies or

philosophies such as Marxism, Utilitarianism, or secular humanism. The ideals inherent within these systems can (and do) motivate behavior as well, but their ultimate source is internal – that is, it can be traced to human reason and instruction with no claim to being modeled on some higher transcendent order. Though reason and instruction play important roles in religion, a religious motivation traces its ultimate source to something beyond humanity – a transcendent order of things which humans seek to attain.

Thus, religion entails the recognition of something greater coupled with a reaction inspired by that realization. This inspired reaction takes on the form of seeking – a lifelong adventure or quest to achieve a closer relationship with or greater understanding of the mysterium tremedum. The devout often conceptualize this as "building the kingdom of God." By serving God's church and ministering to His people the devout seek to create a moral community that increasingly approximates the perfect order and justice of the divine. In the context of the synthesis currently being envisioned, the devout are invited to enlarge their quest to include scientific knowledge as part of the resource pool they tap in the course of building their moral community. For scientists a similar type of seeking is also common. Scientists often view themselves as engaged in a lifelong quest for understanding. This quest often begins in the form of solving "small" theoretical problems, but often enlarges over time. As part of a synthesis project they are likewise invited to enlarge their search by accessing the knowledge of the great religious wisdom traditions and participating in communities that seek moral excellence as well as professional communities that seek scientific excellence.

Specifics of the Response: Compassion, Self-Restraint, and Service.

[1] The author thanks Dr. Jonathon Bassett for pointing him toward Otto on this issue.

The specifics of the response called for in the current definition are in keeping with the best teachings of the world's great religious traditions and empirically demonstrable as being beneficial for individuals and the communities around them. Compassion is a central theme in nearly every religious tradition. In Mahayana Buddhism, for example, compassion takes the form of the Tara, the Goddess of Compassion and the mother of all Buddhas. Additionally, bodhisattatvas in this tradition are enlightened ones who have chosen to remain in the world out of concern for the spiritual development of others. In Islam Allah is known as Al-Rehman, or The Compassionate, and zakat (charity to the less fortunate) is one of Islam's great pillars. Self-restraint is embodied in nearly all religious traditions in the form of divine laws or commandments that the faithful must follow. Practicing Jews have over six hundred laws to which they are bound. In Hinduism to achieve the ultimate goal of moksha or release from rebirth, dharma is required. Dharma refers to right behavior and includes such things as: artha, the pursuit of legitimate worldly success; and kama, the pursuit of legitimate pleasure. Finally, service is well reflected in the Christian tradition where Jesus is portrayed as washing the feet of his followers and commanding that the greatest among them must serve the least (John chapter 13).

The behavioral traits of compassion, self-restraint, and service are not just intuitively desirable and universal teachings from varied religious traditions, but also can be shown empirically to have benefits for those who practiced them and for the community around them. Consider, for example, the fact that those who exercise compassion in the form of forgiveness have been found to have reduced cortisol levels. Cortisol is a physical indicator of stress which when elevated can have deleterious effects

on immune system function (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Sapolsky, 1993). The self-restraint embodied in religious behavioral commandments appears to play an important role in protecting adolescents from drug abuse and delinquency (Jang & Johnson, 2001; Merrill, Salazar, & Gardner, 2001). Furthermore, most religions place a high value on marriage and fidelity within marriage. Studies have shown that stable, high-quality marriages provide both physical and psychological benefits to those involved (Combs, 1991; Gallo, Troxel, Matthews, & Kuller, 2003; Lillard & Waite, 1995; Myers, 2001; Wilson & Oswald, 2002). Finally, service in the form of volunteerism, community and civic involvement and church membership have been found to be important indicators of community health (see Social Capital Survey, 2001). Thus, the specific religious injunctions to practice compassion, self-restraint, and service need not be accepted simply on authority (as may be sufficient for the devout) but can also hold rational appeal to the skeptic because of their established empirical functions in building individual happiness and community health.

Moving Toward One Another: Compromises the Devout Must Make

Earlier it was stated that in order to find common ground between the devout and the skeptic each must move in the other's direction. We are now in a position to articulate the manner of that movement. How does the devout make his/her religion more rational and therefore more welcoming of the skeptic? Likewise, how does the skeptic adopt a worldview more open to the powerful inspirational and spiritual nature of human experience? Starting with the devout, I have two proposals.

Waive the Supernatural Prerequisite

As stated earlier, nature as revealed by science possess as great (if not greater) a challenge to our imaginations as our predecessors' supernatural worlds ever did. Thus, realizing that there is something greater than humanity in the universe and responding to that realization by living a life a greater compassion, self-restraint, and service need not entail supernatural beliefs. Considering supernaturalism as a "waived prerequisite" does not mean that it must necessarily be abandoned. As in the past, the devout may find supernatural beliefs (e.g. miracles, the afterlife of the soul, resurrection, etc.) to be powerful motivators for living an ethical life. But the skeptic should be permitted to find his/her motivation elsewhere if necessary. The critical point of agreement is that there is a particular behavioral response or lifestyle that is required of the religious person. If supernaturalism contributes constructively to the practice of this lifestyle – then let it thrive. If it is a hindrance, then set it aside.

Place Behavior Above Belief

Possibly the most challenging move the devout must make (especially the Christian devout) is to place behavior as the defining feature of a religious person rather than confessional beliefs. Religion is what you do, not necessarily what you say you believe. While this may seem challenging there is actually much in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as other traditions, on which this can be based. Take, for example, the passage in Matthew (25:31-46) where Jesus describes the judgement of the Son of Man. As described, this final judgement is based on behavior (I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me, etc.) with no mention of beliefs. Interestingly, historians have identified this particular passage as a likely authentic teaching of Jesus (Ehrman, 1999). This would hardly be surprising as there is a

long tradition in Rabbinical Judaism of emphasizing behavioral compliance with God's laws as paramount over any correct set of intellectual beliefs (Praeger & Telushkin, 1975). The Hebrew Scriptures even go so far as depicting God anointing a non-Jew as the chosen one to save Israel (see Isaiah chapters 44-45). This theme is not only prominent in the Jewish roots of Christianity, but its Hellenistic ones as well. In Plato's Phaedo (82a-84c), Socrates discusses the destination of the soul after death, clearly stating that it depends on the manner in which one has lived life:

> the destination of others will depend on the way in which they have *behaved*. The happiest of these, who will also have the best destination are those who have *practiced* popular and social virtue… (my intalics 82a).

These passages suggest that the devout need not consider placing behavior above belief as a fundamental and intolerable break with long-standing tradition. Rather, it can be defended as the rediscovery of old traditions that have been, for various reasons, devalued over the long course of history (See Ward, 2000 p. 244 for recent discussion).

Moving Toward One Another: Compromises the Skeptic Must Make

Abandoning Explanatory Exclusivity

The scientific skeptic must acknowledge that science is not the sole source of knowledge about the universe. For some issues, such as the subjective human experience of life, human relationships, values and morality, science has little explanatory power and other sources including religious ones must be consulted. For example, consider morality. While science may give us insights into the origins of the human moral sense, it cannot

tell us what moral system is best for human existence. Imagine what would be necessary to scientifically address this issue. One would need to construct some test of, say, Utilitarian ethics versus Kantian ethics in two matched samples. Even if this much were realistic, one would still have the intractable problem of what to measure in the groups (e.g. individual happiness? group cohesion? frequency of intragroup conflict? human flourishing?) and how to measure it. A similar problem is becoming increasingly apparent in the study of consciousness. Scientific methods are increasingly providing valuable data on the origins, evolution, and biological basis of consciousness (Dehaene, 2001; Rossano, 2003; Roth, 2001). None of this, though, penetrates into the subjective experience of conscious entities, a realm which many have argued is simply beyond the third-person, objective methods of science (Chalmers, 1996; McGinn, 1991;Velmans, 2000). Finally, even the most hardcore scientific skeptic must acknowledge that no one lives life by scientific methods, especially when it comes to human relationships. We cannot scientifically test to see if our friends, potential business partners, or mates are the best rational choices in which to invest our energies and emotions (the classic commitment problem, see Frank, 1988). We are on our own here, following our emotions and gut instincts, paying our money and taking our chances with life, hoping that someone's interest in Homer actually means that he might behave honorably.

Acknowledge the Authority of Religious Leaders

If science cannot provide all the relevant knowledge necessary to live an ethical life, then one must turn to non-scientific authorities. Furthermore, if religion is, in fact, a response to a "sensed higher order" of existence, then those who have dedicated their lives to achieving a closer relationship with or greater understanding of that "higher

order" may be valuable ethical resources. Thus the skeptic must allow for a dual set of authoritative voices. Scientific authorities should be studied on issues regarding the mechanistic functioning of the universe, while religious authorities must be studied on issues regarding what is of value in the universe. "Religious authority" however, can be understood quite broadly to include anyone who has prescribed a certain manner of living in response to a sensed order beyond humanity. While this includes traditionally recognized religious leaders such as Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha, it might also include others such as Socrates given that his pursuit of the ethical life was done in response to his "daimon." The truly wise make themselves students of both the rational/scientific authorities and the religious/contemplative authorities.

The Necessity of Community in the Pursuit of Moral Excellence

Just as scientific excellence cannot be pursued in isolation, moral excellence cannot either. Both require a community of like-minded individuals who interact, critique, and support one another. One of the most powerful mechanisms in science is that of self-correction through peer review. This mechanism has been marvelously successful in weeding out weak theories, testing the soundness of new ideas, and steadily moving science forward. To be a scientist necessarily requires participation in the public discussion and evaluation of ideas and evidence. Pursuing moral excellence is similarly and necessarily a public venture. In the ancient Jewish tradition, the Sabbath day of rest was for the purpose of gathering in the synagogue to read and discuss God's law (Sanders, 1992). Socrates went into the streets asking people about virtue and justice. If one is truly serious about living the ethical life and achieving moral excellence, then one must be part of a moral community which gathers regularly to reflect upon their

individual and collective moral progress. Group ritual, dialectical examination of ethical issues and interpretations of sacred texts, and regular reflective and contemplative pauses are necessary for establishing, maintaining, and growing in the ethical life. Just as publication and interaction are necessary in the scientific life, some manner of church, prayer, and "Sunday school" must be a regular part of one's moral life.

Conclusions

Anyone who attempts synthesis between science and religion runs the risk of pleasing devotees of neither. No doubt both skeptics and religionists will find much to disparage in my attempt. The project at hand though is a long-term one, and the current paper (if it has accomplished anything) may at best be a small step down a long road. Criticisms may help to further refine issues and clarify murky thinking. Over half a century ago, Edmund Husserl (echoing Aristotle) argued that science was incomplete because of its inability to incorporate the human perspective (Husserl, 1937/1999). Similarly religion becomes irrelevant if it casts aside rational moorings. The devout should not be required to check their brains upon entering the church house any more than scientists should be required to check their souls when donning the labcoat.

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