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OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2024 Religious Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–20 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (XXXX). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

DEBATE ABOUT THE COMPLEMENTARITY OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose ONE of the questions below. Write an essay that answers the question you have chosen in relation to the debate about the complementarity of science and religion.

Space for planning is provided on page 4 of this booklet. Begin your answer on page 5.

EITHER: QUESTION ONE

"Sceptical scrutiny is the means, in both science and religion, by which deep thoughts can be winnowed from deep nonsense."

– Carl Sagan, cosmologist

"My view is that if your philosophy is not unsettled daily, then you are blind to all the universe has to offer."

– Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist

Questioning strongly held religious beliefs and scientific theories is difficult for some, but it has been argued that the search for truth in both science and religion needs an openness to questioning and testing.

How might a willingness to question and test beliefs and hypotheses, both religious and scientific, contribute to the debate about the complementarity of science and religion?

either interaction having caveats

OR: QUESTION TWO

"Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science. That is the order of the great subjects of life, that's their order of importance."

– Dame Muriel Spark, novelist and short story writer

"There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, and science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win, because it works."

– Stephen Hawking, mathematician and physicist

The differences in scientific and religious approaches to understanding the world, and life, can be a strong combination for the betterment of humankind and the planet.

What challenges might there be to science and religion working together to address issues such as poverty, global warming, environmental disasters, pandemics, or times of societal collapse?

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The assessment continues on the following page.**

PLANNING

Question One:

How might a willingness to question beliefs or hypotheses contribute to the complementarity between science and Religion.

- 1) Psychology and Religion. Scientific standpoint that challenges Religion for believers.
A willingness to accept this makes it convenient but not viable. (Hypothesis but not belief)
- 2) Deism, Religion, origins of the universe
An openness to incorporate the findings of Science with religion aids the complementarity debate but cannot aid any doctrine
(Hypothesis and belief)
- 3) the conflict between miracles and Science, compatible only in a Humean sense of a non-predictive science

"the point of the resurrection is that the present body is not valueless because it will die, what you do on earth matters because of the great future God has in store for it"

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

☒ Question One

☐ Question Two

The 20th century ~~Physicist~~ Physicist, Albert Einstein, said that "Science without religion is lame, but Religion without science is blind." Over the last two-hundred years, the schism between religious beliefs and scientific hypothesis has seemingly grown more and more divided. Though, this is ill informed, and there are numerous ways the complementarity between science and religion can be supported*. I interpret the essay question to mean ask how religious beliefs and scientific hypotheses/discoveries conflict, and how an open willingness to accept caveats in their interaction can aid the complementarity of ~~science~~ science and religion debate. There are three typologies for scientific and religious interaction. 1) is the discussion ~~for~~ of religion as a psychological, social tool for unity. 2) is the debate over 'natural theology' - the study of the natural world in search for God, which incorporates religion into the ~~gaps in~~ unanswered questions of scientific hypothesis. And 3),

* although with varying degrees of success

the conflict between modern science and religion, specifically divine intervention. Ultimately questioning scientific hypothesis or religious ~~theology~~ ~~this thesis~~ belief can provide complementarity between the two, although certain caveats make this a hard task.

In affirming this thesis, this essay will focus on a western-christian point of view, as religion is a broad topic. Similarly, this essay focuses on western science of the last two-thousand years.

A psychological, scientific analysis of religion can ultimately illustrate complementarity through scientific hypothesis, although it may conflict with the beliefs of religion.

The 19th century sociologist, Emile Durkheim, proposed a definition for religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices" that he reasons binds a community under a "collective conscience".

Durkheim argues that religion is a grounding force of unity that is capable of providing stability to a community, especially in times of rapid and severe change. This assumption is reinforced by

the 20th century philosopher, John Hick, who proposed that religion or 'salvation' is the "transformation from self-centredness to reality-centredness." Hence, Hick reasserts the hypothesis that religion provides reason to turn away from private ambition or selfishness to instead focus on the survival of the "collective conscience" as a way to keep the species alive. In this way, religion can be seen as a tool for civic order, regardless of whether or not the beliefs of the religion are based in truth.

Using Durkheim's ~~hypothesis~~ ^{hypothesis}, an argument can be made for the complementarity of science and religion. The American biologist, Stephen J. Gould, proposed a system where science and religion are considered "non-overlapping magisteria" (NOMA). Under NOMA, science is left to deal with empirical facts of nature, while religion is able to provide answers to questions of morality and ethics. This is especially apparent to the debate over the complementarity of science and religion, as science is unable to empirically prove our sense of right and wrong. Thus complementarity can be achieved by use of scientific hypothesis over the

definition of religion, all the while seemingly keeping religious beliefs of morality and ethics intact.

Although, neuroscientist and philosopher, Sam Harris, rejects the idea of NOMA, ~~as~~ under the assumption that "it concedes morality to religion." In a 2023 interview with Jordan Peterson, Harris argued that should someone lose their religious beliefs, they would have no reason to maintain their sense of morality. John Lennox, the contemporary mathematician and theologian, counters Harris explaining that our sense of morality (specifically in western culture) stems from the expansion of religion such as Christianity. Therefore, contra Harris, his sense of right and wrong is formed via the habituation of religious beliefs in the society it lives (or lived in). For example, the christian sense of sexual immorality can be traced back to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. Likewise the central christian value of humility can be traced to Philipians 2:3-4: "do nothing out of private ambition or vain conceit. Rather value others above yourself." As religion

expanded, so too did these values spread to the societies they reached. This hypothesis ~~for a~~ ~~del~~ formed by Durkheim and Gould, is also apparent in pre-Christian ~~religions~~ ^{societies} such as Ancient Greece. This hyper-religious society had starkly different moral codes from that of western society today, as they often glorified polygamy, sexual transgression, and killing in myths, folklore, and literature such as Homer's Iliad. Therefore there is an argument to be made that this hypothesis over the definition of religion can illustrate the complementarity between science and religion while still maintaining religious beliefs about morality and ethics.

Though, Durkheim's definition of religion and its complementarity with science comes with a caveat. Joseph Ratzinger, who later ~~was~~ became Pope Benedict XVI, criticized this hypothesis claiming that the value of religion lies in its ability to provide answers to the deepest human questions such as our origins, or the meaning of life. Benedict reasons that when religion is reduced to a civic tool or societal construct, it loses its ability to speak on these profound

issues. This therefore is the caveat of the psychological relationship between science and religion and the attempt to achieve complementarity. Benedict argues that such a mindset ~~is~~ renders a religion unsustainable and is what ultimately ~~and~~ allowed the pagan religions to fizzle out. Thus this complementary sought after by Gould, Durkheim, Lennon and Hick can only be achieved under some willingness to allow religion to be reduced to a social construct, which is unsustainable.

Is there, therefore, a way for the profound answering ability ~~to~~ ~~to~~ explained by Benedict to be kept while still offering complementarity between science and religion? 'Natural Theology' - the study of the natural world in search for God - is seemingly able to incorporate religious beliefs about our origins alongside scientific hypothesis. Through scientific discovery, various truths about the universe have been discovered that point to the existence of a divinity who created the universe. The ~~19th~~ ~~or~~ 20th century

Quantum Physicist and Theologian, John Polkinghorne, provides two arguments, based on scientific hypothesis that provide evidence for a creator God in his book, "Science and creation". Polkinghorne's first argument, the "intelligibility of the world argument" is rooted in the basis that our universe is bound under laws and uniformity rather than chaos. Polkinghorne reasons that because we are able to rationalize the universe and that we can understand these laws, this points to the existence of a rational, ~~and~~ intelligent mind ~~at the~~ responsible for its creation. He reasons that our understanding of complex scientific theories that go beyond day-to-day tasks go beyond any need to survive, and ~~yet~~ ^{thus} our understanding of them ~~does not~~ cannot be explained by the assumption that ~~&~~ our understanding hinges on 'survival of the fittest'.

Secondly, Polkinghorne proposes the 'anthropic principle', reasoning that our universe is a delicate balance of constants, balanced perfectly in such a way that sustains life. Polkinghorne specifically cites the competing expanding force of the "Big Bang" and the contracting force of gravity. He explains that if the strength of gravity

differed by one part in 10^{60} , the universe would either expand too quickly and become too 'dilute' for anything interesting to happen, or conversely, contract too quickly and crash back in on itself. Polkinghorne takes this balance of constants, which he describes as the fine-tuning of 'cosmic knobs', and makes the assumption that a creator God is behind it. While Polkinghorne does accept the multiverse argument in an attempt to justify the existence of different cosmic knob settings, he reasons that this theory is unsustainable and unstable and he reasons it is much more likely the work of a creator who wills into life a universe "capable of producing beings who can come to know Him". Thus Polkinghorne provides a complementarity of science and religion using scientific hypothesis which is still able to answer questions such as the origins of life that Pope Benedict XVI describes.

However, Sam Harris illustrates a flaw in Polkinghorne's link from scientific hypothesis to religious belief. He argues that it is an "unjustified leap of faith".

to presume that this unidentifiable deity is the God of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or any religion. The phenomenon proposed by Polkinghorne, Deism, conflicts with the ability to answer the profound question of the meaning of life pondered by Benedict XVI. Similarly, there is seemingly no way to corroborate the ideas of morality and ethics proposed by Durkheim and Gould. Therefore, complementarity could only be achieved by a leap of faith and while Polkinghorne's arguments are not necessarily invalid, the use of natural theology is simply not enough to justify religious doctrines or dogma. In this sense, a willingness to adapt beliefs to simply Deism may provide complementarity between science and religion, this is a hard caveat to move past.

Still there is a third typology of interaction between science and religion: Conflict. The conflict between ~~some~~ divine intervention of religion and the scientific method can be overcome, however. Although, this ~~method~~ willingness to adapt

beliefs differs from the previous two described as this time science must be the one willing to adapt. Divine intervention provides a seemingly difficult phenomenon to overcome with science as it contradicts the foundational beliefs of science. Science is typically defined as an empirical method of testing knowledge based on repeatable, consistent evidence. The 18th century physicist Issac Newton expresses this ideal saying science or 'nature' is "pleased by simplicity, and nature is no dummy". Miracles on the other hand are defined by David Hume, ~~the~~ as "violations of the laws of nature" and for that reason provide a difficult phenomenon for science to accept. They introduce unrepeatable, inconsistent anomalies and for that reason provides conflict between science and religion.

Miracles, though, provide the framework for religion and provide answers to the profound questions of human existence, such as the meaning of life, that Benedict XVI reasons is the goal of religion. Christ, for example, does not hold the value that he does simply because he is an

archetype or an interesting figure, his value is born from the fact that his miracles and his suffering is rooted in human history. It is this suffering and true testimony that gives christianity its value. The contemporary new testament scholar * reflects this sentiment in reference to the resurrection - "the ~~resurrection~~ point of the resurrection is that the present body is not valueless just because it will die, ~~but because~~ what you do on earth matters because of the great future that God has in store for it."

Though, a willingness to redefine the foundations of science could alleviate this conflict and instead provide complementarity. David Hume, alongside his description of miracles, also proposed a 'Humanean' view of science. The current view of science is a 'necessitarian' view point that argues that the laws of science are absolute and are able to predict phenomena for eternity. The Humanean view, however, proposes that there is no way we can know for sure that science is eternally repeatable,

* N. T. Wright

instead it only appears this way based on previous observation.* The Humanean view of science proposes a scenario where miracles - ~~violate~~ exceptions to the rules - are viable and therefore illustrates a scenario of complementarity between science and religion based on a willingness to be open to an alternative view of science.

This Humanean view of science is not only a resolution to ~~the~~ the conflict caused by miracles, but can also allow for a scenario where Polkinghorne's arguments for a creator also remain valid and the Durkheim - Gould view of religion as a source of morality and ethics. Together, under the Humanean scientific worldview, there could be a wholistic complementarity between science and religion, as a combination of the three could provide answers to the profound questions of humanity described by Benedict XVI, while not discounting ~~the~~ religious beliefs.

* rather this is merely an assumption, as we cannot say what happens in the future.

or ^{previous} scientific observations. Though, the world has become increasingly dependant on science and instigating a culture shift away from the idea of necessitarian science would be a monumentous task and would face much backlash. The alternative, however, is that the divide between science and religion continues to grow. Religion will ~~likely become~~ Society would likely become more and more secular and as religion slowly dies, so too will our sense of morality as per Durkheim's definition of religion and Gould's 'NOMA', presenting a rather dire set of consequences.

The complimentary between science and religion debate has been primarily hindered by the reluctance to accept alternative viewpoints that do not align with their beliefs. Though, this acceptance of caveats is the only way to find absolute complementarity. From a necessitarian viewpoint of science, religion can only be seen as complimentary either as a social construct, or as a Deism to provide an answer to the creation of the universe. Each of which have religious caveats as a willingness to accept that their religion

has no potential to answer the deepest questions of human existence. From a Human perspective of science, and the willingness to accept that science is merely observational and not absolute, science is able to accommodate the leading conflict between science and religion: Divine intervention. Although, the Human science could also alleviate ~~accept~~ the ~~ness~~ hinderances between science and religion under necessitarian science, indicating perhaps that ~~the~~^a willingness to change science may prove most beneficial. ~~Theref Therefore, while it is~~ I will end this essay with a quote from the 17th century philosopher, Francis Bacon:

"A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism. Depth in philosophy bringeth man's mind to God."

Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Religious Studies

Standard: 93603

Total score: 20

Aspect	Score	Marker commentary
1	07	The candidate demonstrated perceptive and insightful comprehension of religious ideas related to their chosen approaches to understanding the debates about the complementarity of science and religion.
2	07	The candidate displayed a synthesis of highly developed knowledge and skills with independent reflection and extrapolation, very ably showing relationships and connections between religious ideas and the approaches to understanding the debate about the complementarity of science and religion they had focused on.
3	06	The candidate wrote a response that had a logical shape to its development. There is a clear progression of ideas and a logical flow of argumentation, leading to an original conclusion.