

Bridging Religion and Science through Ethics

The influence of the church during the medieval period was copious, especially in the region of Europe. They look after the spiritual welfare of the people and are one of the wealthiest associations in the world, having connections with notable kings and queens in different countries. Being a wealthy sector, clergymen have a big opportunity to study and become a scholar, which results in globally known scientists, philosophers, and philanthropists. The medieval philosophers that were part of this era were St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. They are both considered as Roman Catholic scholars. Thomas was a student in the University of Naples and a teacher in the University of Paris and Italy. Augustine was a Roman Catholic Bishop that served in Hippo. He stated that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God it resulted in “Original sin”, the sin that became the source of all evil to all humans. Throughout the Middle Ages, denominations didn't really exist. There was really only one 'denomination' and that was the Roman Catholic Church. The Church held tremendous political power and their church authorities held more power than kings and queens. They wield more power than the often-weak feudal monarchies that characterized medieval society. The leading philosopher of the middle ages was Thomas Aquinas who maintained that reason, unaided by faith, can give us knowledge of God's existence and an understanding of morality as it is grounded in natural law. Aquinas' philosophy starts with a view of the relation between faith and reason.

The first and evident distinction between the teachings of the Modern Period and the Medieval Catholic Philosophers is that one roots their beliefs from religion and the other does not. To Kant, our actions follow a set of universal rules that distinguishes what is morally right from what is morally wrong. We perform actions simply because it is our duty to do them. In

contrast to this are the philosophies of Bentham and Mill. If deontology believes that our actions are what determine what is right and wrong, consequentialism and utilitarianism believe that the result or consequence of our actions is what dictates if the action is right or wrong. The act of lying is already considered morally wrong to Kant, but to Bentham and Mill, if lying will produce a good outcome that will benefit the greater good then it is considered as morally right. From the three modern philosophies, deontology is probably the closest to the beliefs of Augustine and Aquinas, but what sets them apart is the fact that natural law and divine command ethics are intertwined with religious beliefs, such as the desire to know and follow God. They believe that God created us rational beings who can act in accordance with reason and that God commands only what is good and moral.

Science and religion are two of the most powerful forces that shape our understanding of self and the world, but science and religion have different points of view on some questions. At the same time ethics could be a bridge between religion and science. In science, explanation must be based on evidence drawn from examining the natural world, while religious faith in contrast does not depend only on empirical evidence and is not necessarily modified in the face of conflicting evidence, typically involving supernatural forces or entities. New understandings about the origin of the universe, consciousness etc. among others provide amazing insights about reality but also raised new questions that science alone could not answer: "What is the purpose of created life? Where is this universe going? Etc. To the popular mind, science is completely inimical to religion: science embraces facts and evidence while the religion professes blind faith. The Christian faith contains deep truths with philosophical consequences that make conceivable the mind's exploration of nature, including the human's place in creation, the revealing nature of

God, and the ways in which God freely creates. Even the creationists realized long ago that they can't sway the opposition simply by asserting that their beliefs are true because they are written in the Bible. John Polkinghorne writes A world without religion finds it hard to explain how “something of lasting significance is glimpsed in the beauty of the natural world and the beauty of the fruits of human creativity,” Science and religion are both important facets of modern life (Samford University 2020). Overall, it may be said that science and religion both complement each other; together they form systems that people put their faith and belief in.

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GROUP 1