

# **EVOLUTION AND RELIGION**

*A philosophical exploration*

Stephan Wetzels

**RADBOUD *UNIVERSITY* NIJMEGEN**

# EVOLUTION AND RELIGION

## *A philosophical exploration*

Stephan Wetzels M.A. M.Sc.

### INTRODUCTION.

If someone wants to write a book or an article about evolution it is wise not to visit the local bookstore or the internet, because this would seriously undermine his motivation to write. After all, so many things have already been said and so many things have already been discussed.... *Nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.*<sup>1</sup> This is also the case with regard to the topic 'evolution and religion'. Hence, the main purpose of this contribution is not to add new data, but rather to put things in perspective and give a personal philosophical reflection on the topic. Even though this philosophical reflection will probably repeat some answers, it also intends to raise some critical questions for both religious thinkers and evolutionists.

In this article I will take a look at the claim that religion is a disease of the mind and the claim that evolution is the only modern reasonable way of looking at life instead of a metaphysical equivalent to religion. To see if these claims make any sense, I will focus on the debate between science and religion, the struggle between them and at religion and religious experiences as diseases of the brain. Further then I will give a short specific philosophical view on evolution and in the end I will ask some questions and give some conclusions on what to do as a man with some of the things evolution and religion bring upon our path of life.

### A VIEW ON THE DEBATE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

The English word *religion* is derived from the Middle English *religioun* which came from the Old French *religion*. It may have been originally derived from the Latin word *religo* which means *good faith, ritual* and other similar meanings. Or it may have come from the Latin *religãre* which means *to tie fast*. I won't get myself into trouble trying to define religion. Others<sup>2</sup> already have done so and have come to the conclusion that no definition is totally satisfying. I can however give a short idea about what religion *means*. For the understanding of this article it is important to know that I see religion and belief as tied together.

Religion is probably one of the most fascinating phenomena which man can explore. This is so because it is the only domain which concerns the essence of our being *beyond* anything else. It is only possible to concern an essence that goes beyond anything else if we have faith.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De Divinatione*, ii. 58. Several editions.

<sup>2</sup> See for an interesting overview: [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_defn.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_defn.htm)

In Hebrews (11: 1,3) we can read a simple statement about this: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (...) Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*”

The question now is, why do people *attack* this statement? Why do scientists and philosophers trouble themselves to fight religion<sup>3</sup>? The simplest answer would be that they cannot believe that people believe, they cannot imagine that people depend on something irrational, since we are rational beings. A more complex answer is not easy to be given and beyond the purpose of this article, since there are numerous of (personal) reasons people have for arguing against belief and religion. “*Religion is based mainly upon fear; fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand . . . . My own view on religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear (...)*”, Bertrand Russell once replied to the question why he was not a religious man.

A personal world without belief is not necessarily empty anymore when it comes to questions of “how did we get here” since Charles Darwin’s “On the Origin of Species.” Theologians quickly labelled Darwin as the most dangerous man in England when he presented this theory of evolution in 1859. That is of course a classical mistake of theologians: as soon as they find something as a threat to the faith, they attack it, often without reason, and often driven by emotion. That is an important difference with the attacks on beliefs and religion<sup>4</sup>: it seems to be reasonable and even supported by science. It is strange then to notice that the mistake of the emotion in the debate has been copied from the theologians. It is remarkable to see how *begeistert* evolutionists (and philosophers<sup>5</sup>) attack ideas which in some way could be a threat to their theory of natural selection and blind creation. It is true that most ideas against evolution or critics on evolution come from ‘religious’ scientists, however it is important to keep in mind that science and religion concentrate on two different questions. This is supported by The American Association for the Advancement of Science which states that the difference between science and religion is found in the kind of questions which are asked. Science is about causes and religion about meaning. The question of Leibniz, why there is something rather than nothing, is not a question in which science is interested. That is more of the domain of religion: it addresses the ultimate ground of nature. This is quite reasonable and seems the end of the debate, since there cannot be a debate at all. It is clear that God never can be out ruled by *any* science, even though many scientists, and not in the last evolutionary scientists, have made it a holy task to get rid of God; and it must be said, that they do it with a lot of motivation and devotion. Pascal already blamed Descartes a few hundred years ago for

---

<sup>3</sup> We could of course ask the same question, why people defend belief and religion.

<sup>4</sup> Leaving the question if it makes any sense to attack belief and religion *as it is* at all. It is interesting to see how many people mix up religion with the religious system, and belief with dogma’s and restriction.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance among many examples the shocking shortsighted emotional analysis on Christianity, Christ and God Simon Blackburn gives in his book *Being Good: A Short Introduction To Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

doing so<sup>6</sup>, however Descartes did it in quite a subtle way. On the other hand it also must be clear that God never can be proven by *any* science. Remarkably, these conclusions seem not to be widely accepted or at least taken seriously into account. Nowadays it seems a hard fight between evolutionists and people who are against evolution (mostly for religious reasons). Both make the same mistake: they are fighting from different domains and in some way they are under the impression that it is useful to attack the other with mostly arguments that only have a special value within its own domain. You could see it like this: the sun is trying to make the ocean go away, while the ocean is trying to make the sun go out. The water and the heat will always remain....

Eventually it would be better to look at the purpose of its own<sup>7</sup>. If somehow creationists were proven right tomorrow beyond all reasonable doubt at this moment, principles of evolution would still be useful scientific tools but even so people would not become all of a sudden inspired religious. Science is not threatened by religion, but on the other hand, religion is not threatened by science. Or is it?

#### **WHY SCIENCE CAN INTERFERE IN RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS.**

Even though science and religion deal with two different questions, they become a threat to each other as soon as the answer given on the scientific question excludes answers given on the religious question<sup>8</sup>. This seems easy to understand, but holds far-reaching consequences: if I am an evolutionist, convinced by its science, this would mean I seriously cannot believe anymore in Trinity, salvation, Justice, arising of the dead and other things found in religious literature. Science and religion has always been easy to combine, and no scientific discovery was by itself ever enough to give up faith, but with the introduction of the ideas of evolution this radically changed. Thus, finding things in science which are not compatible with answers given by religion on the same topic, makes one think again on the classical religious questions; except for the fact that these questions are not challenged with a religious view but with a scientific one.<sup>9</sup> As Russell states it: "*science can help us to get over this craven fear in which mankind has lived for so many generations. Science can teach us, and I think our own*

---

<sup>6</sup> Blaise Pascal (1670). *Pensées*. Translated out of French by W.F. Trotter. Edition Léon Brunschvicg (1958). New York: Dover.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance some conclusions Spinoza makes in his 15th chapter of the Theologico-Political Treatise: "*We ought not to be hindered if we find that our investigation of the meaning of Scripture thus conducted shows us that it is here and there repugnant to reason; for whatever we may find of this sort in the Bible, which men may be in ignorance of, without injury to their charity, has, we may be sure, no bearing on theology or the Word of God, and may, therefore, without blame, be viewed by every one as he pleases. To sum up, we may draw the absolute conclusion that the Bible must not be accommodated to reason, nor reason to the Bible.*"

<sup>8</sup> And of course vice versa. But again I quote Spinoza: "*Those, therefore, who attempt to set forth the authority of Scripture with mathematical demonstrations are wholly in error: for the authority, of the Bible is dependent on the authority of the prophets, and can be supported by no stronger arguments than those employed in old time by the prophets for convincing the people of their own authority.*"

<sup>9</sup> Of course, many things have been said before by science which was not compatible with religion and religious ideas, but was not as such a threat to the essence of religion like the theory of evolution: the sense of man and the sense of life.

*hearts can teach us, no longer to look round for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a fit place to live in, instead of the sort of place that the Churches in all these centuries have made it.*<sup>10</sup>

Believing the scientific answers, being convinced by the theory of evolution gives room to think about *why* people are religious and what religion is, since it cannot be the truth anymore because one has found *reasonable* answers, so it seems, to some of the old questions. That is the legitimization science of evolution has to interfere and to attack religious thinkers and religious ideas: they have ideas which are not reasonable and they have ideas which are bad for the world. If a religious man asks: “*what makes sense?*”, the answer of evolution would be: “*there is no sense, since we have discovered that there simply cannot be a God which cares for you, who sets you free, who listens to your prayers, who gave you free will, who sent prophets.... there is no meaning in creation, there is no design in the universe with a meaning, there is no Moral Law, nothing except for the fact that we are what we are by a mysterious coincidence, and easily could have been something else.*”

Many things have been said by scientists about religion, but one of the latest of explaining what religion is, is to regard religion as a condition of the brain, or as a ‘disease’ of the brain or as a mental illness. With regard to evolution this seems the most reasonable way to explain this phenomenon, just like schizophrenia for example; everything is in the brain, even religion.

#### **RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES AS DISEASES OF THE MIND.**

We now come to the question if religion and religious experiences can be viewed as a disease or as a mental disorder. William James did, as one of the first, some serious thinking on the connection between religion and neurology in his “The Varieties of Religious Experience” (1902). James summarises “the characteristics of the religious life” as follows: “1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance; 2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end; 3. That prayer or inner communion, with the spirit thereof - be that spirit ‘God’ or ‘law’ - is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world. Religion includes also the following psychological characteristics: 4. A new zest which adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism. 5. An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.”<sup>11</sup>

So religion *works* according to James. He admits, however, following the Kantian critics, that the evidence of religious experience does not point conclusively to the existence of God: “*The only thing that it unequivocally testifies to is that we can experience union with something*

---

<sup>10</sup> Russell, B. (2004). *Why I am not a Christian. And other Essays on Religion and related subjects*. New York: Routledge Classics.

<sup>11</sup> James, W. (1902). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. London. Pp. 485-486.

*larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace.*" <sup>12</sup>. James however never gave a serious thought to the fact that religion could be a *disease* of the mind; that seems to be more manifest in the recent century which we now take a look on.

According to Bertrand Russell religion is a disease as we already have seen, and it seems that this is generally an atheistic idea which has spread itself out. *"Religion is a disease. It is born of fear; it compensates through hate in the guise of authority, revelation. Religion, enthroned in a powerful social organization, can become incredibly sadistic. No religion has been more cruel than the Christian"*, anthropologist George A. Dorsey once said, and even Heraclitus already thought of religion as a disease, even though he considered it as a noble disease. However, it often remains just an idea, not supported by any evidence. The idea however, has become quite powerful. The responsibility for deciding what is a crime or a disease is easily and moreover passed into the hands of a few 'experts', and potentially any state of mind could be treated as a disease. Twice in the 20th century two religions have been 'treated' in precisely this way. In the late 1930s and 40s in Germany, the Nazis rather unsubtly treated the Jews in the gas chambers and in the 1960s and 70s in the Soviet Union, the Communists perhaps more subtly treated Christians who were put into psychiatric institutions to help them get over their disease. This could happen because it has happened; this could happen because these people were viewed as a sickness and a threat to society..... But let us take a closer look at the meaning of disease.

If we take a look at what a disease means, we see that for instance a disease can be viewed as any abnormal condition of the body or mind that causes discomfort, dysfunction, or distress to the person affected or those in contact with the person. Sometimes the term is used broadly to include injuries, disabilities, syndromes, symptoms, deviant behaviours, and atypical variations of structure and function, while in other contexts these may be considered distinguishable categories. A mental disorder is according to the DSM IV (1994) any clinically significant behavioural or psychological syndrome characterized by the presence of distressing symptoms, impairment of functioning, or significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or loss of freedom. Mental disorders are assumed to be the manifestation of a behavioural, psychological, or biological dysfunction in the individual. The concept does *not* include deviant behaviour, disturbances that are essentially conflicts between the individual and society, or expected and culturally sanctioned responses to particular events. Following these types of definitions, it seems at firsthand strange to say that religion is a disease or a mental disorder. To be considered a medical disorder a failure of function must in a way do harm to the individual and thus have implications for the need for intervention (Wakefield, 1997). From an evolutionary perspective we could say however that religion is a mental function which leads to the opposite of what it intends (instead of redemption and eternal life for instance, dead and a total loss of the self into nothingness), and therefore is in some matter harmful-although that is a strange thing to say. So even though we could think of religion as useful (it comforts, it reduces stress, it gives hope, etc.<sup>13</sup>) it is

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 525.

<sup>13</sup> But the opposite can also be the case as we will see.

eventually harmful and dysfunctional since it doesn't lead to what is expected. Another thing which has to be mentioned is that some explicit and violent behaviour comes from religion. Religion leads to aggressiveness, religion is unreasonable and therefore dangerous, religion can also be a threat to modern society, since it comes from another age, with other conventions and rules (so it threatens moral, it oppresses women, etc.). Of course, when religion leads to these kinds of things, it actually has lost its purpose- but still, these arguments can be used to say that religion is a disease and people have to be cured.

There isn't hardly any article in evolutionary psychology which supports this idea by scientific arguments, even though some authors give it a try. In his work 'the selfish gene' the English evolutionary biologist and polemic atheist Richard Dawkins states that the idea of God is like a virus in our world of ideas; as soon as it developed it started to spread in the heads of people and copied itself on and on to children and others, totally unuseful and totally wrong (Dawkins, 1976). Later he stated: "*I do think the Roman Catholic religion is a disease of the mind which has a particular epidemiology similar to that of a virus... Religion is a terrific meme. That's right. But that doesn't make it true and I care about what's true. Smallpox virus is a terrific virus. It does its job magnificently well. That doesn't mean that it's a good thing. It doesn't mean that I don't want to see it stamped out.*"<sup>14</sup>

Dysfunctional or not, a disease or not, the idea that religion is in the brain is more and more widely spread among scientists. Religion in the brain means in essence that God is not a transcendental Being, but made up by ourselves. It is our own brain that is deceiving us, whether or not caused by abnormalities of the brain.

Recent development in technology makes it possible to do intensive research on the brain and to look for the thing which James called 'larger than ourselves'. There is some speculation that the brain has a certain area, reserved for religion, just like there is a certain area reserved for language. Scientists believe that some answers can be given towards religious experiences by concentrating on the phenomenon of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE). TLE was defined in 1985 by the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) as a condition characterized by recurrent unprovoked seizures originating from the medial or lateral temporal lobe. The seizures associated with TLE consist of simple partial seizures without loss of awareness (with or without aura) and complex partial seizures (i.e. with loss of awareness). The individual loses awareness during a complex partial seizure because the seizure spreads to involve both temporal lobes, which causes impairment of memory.

Some neuroscientists think that individuals who have TLE and often undergo sudden and dramatic mood changes when their disease manifests are 'spiritual'; this idea is supported by the fact that in some cases patients went from agnostic or atheist to strongly and actively "born again" in one faith or another.

---

<sup>14</sup> Sceptic vol 3, no 4, 1995

LaPlante<sup>15</sup> speculates that the mystical religious experiences of some of the great prophets were induced by TLE. The religious prophets most often thought to have had epilepsy are Mohammad, Moses and St. Paul<sup>16</sup>. Dostoevsky, also an epileptic, thought it was obvious that Mohammad's visions of God were triggered by epilepsy. "*Mohammad assures us in this Koran that he had seen Paradise,*" Dostoevsky notes. "*He did not lie. He had indeed been in Paradise, during an attack of epilepsy, from which he suffered, as I do.*"

The classical explanation of James, the speculations of philosophers, the 'just so stories about the harmful religion' and the findings of neuroscience are for the modern Darwinians not satisfying. As Richard Dawkins states: "*Is religion a medical placebo, which prolongs life by reducing stress? Perhaps, although the theory is going to have to run the gauntlet of sceptics who point out the many circumstances in which religion increases stress rather than decreases it*"<sup>17</sup>. *In any case, I find the placebo theory too meagre to account for the massive and all-pervasive phenomenon of religion. I do not think we have religion because our religious ancestors reduced their stress levels and hence survived longer. I don't think that's a big enough theory for the job.*

*Other theories miss the point of Darwinian explanations altogether. I refer to suggestions like, "Religion satisfies our curiosity about the universe and our place in it." Or "Religion is consoling. People fear death and are drawn to religions which promise we'll survive it."*<sup>18</sup> *There may be some psychological truth here, but it's not in itself a Darwinian explanation."*

Dawkins urges that Darwinians should keep the right questions in mind: "*If neuroscientists find a "god centre" in the brain, Darwinian scientists like me want to know why the god centre evolved. Why did those of our ancestors who had a genetic tendency to grow a god centre survive better than rivals who did not? The ultimate Darwinian question is not a better question, not a more profound question, not a more scientific question than the proximate neurological question. But it is the one I happen to be talking about here.*"

A Darwinian version of the fear-of-death theory than would have to be of the form: "*belief in survival after death tends to postpone the moment when it is put to the test.*" "*This could be true or it could be false—maybe it's another version of the stress and placebo theory—but I shall not pursue the matter.*"

The point of Dawkins is that this is the kind of way in which a Darwinian must rewrite the question. And as evolutionary scientist Steven Pinker has said in *How the Mind Works* (1997): "*How does religion fit into a mind that one might have thought was designed to reject the palpably not true? (. . .) it only raises the question of why a mind would evolve to find*

---

<sup>15</sup> LaPlante, E. (1993) *Seized*. HarperCollins: New York.

<sup>16</sup> LaPlante thinks there is evidence in history and in Scriptures that these prophets fit symptoms of temporal lobe epilepsy.

<sup>17</sup> It is doubtful if this claim of Dawkins makes sense. Latest research shows that the role of religion in health is significant, though complex. In *The Healing Power of Faith: Science Explores Medicine's Last Great Frontier* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999) author Koenig states: "we already know this is true: "Faith is powerful medicine — not just for the mind but also for the body." See also the conclusions of Larson et. al. in *Research Findings on Religious Commitment and Mental Health*. *Psychiatric Times*, October 2000 Vol. XVII Issue 10 .

<sup>18</sup> As Russell probably would agree with.



*comfort in beliefs it can plainly see are false. A freezing person finds no comfort in believing he is warm; a person face-to-face with a lion is not put at ease by the conviction that it is a rabbit.”* (p. 555-556). The questions seem to remain.

## COMING TO QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.

In this final section I will give a personal and philosophical view on the things said so far. In this article we have taken a look at (evolutionary) science and religion and the consequences of these two besides each other.

According to Immanuel Kant, the whole philosophical domain can be summed up in four questions: What can I know? What do I have to do? What can I hope for? What is man? The philosophical handicraft consists in developing and justifying answers to these questions. The theory of evolution gave us a serious new way of thinking about these questions. But are the answers to these questions clearer now evolution is in favour? The idea of the *Blind Watchmaker*, the whole mystery of coincidence which made us, leaves no room for a divine Creator and for that reason religion and religious experiences cannot be *real*. It is the task of evolutionary scientists to find the true meaning of religion and why it was able to develop. Some already have come to the conclusion that evolutionary theory is a scientific theory dealing with scientific data, not a system of metaphysical beliefs or a religion<sup>19</sup>, while others say that "*when we discuss creation/evolution, we are talking about beliefs: i.e. religion. The controversy is not religion versus science, it is religion versus religion, and the science of one religion versus the science of another.*"<sup>20</sup>. Whatever may be the truth, it is clear that evolutionary theory has no answers to metaphysical problems, it even excludes them. It cannot give an answer to *the* fundamental question, if theory of evolution is true, how it can produce the results which it produces? What, in other words, must be then the *highest* power in the universe, if we are talking about evolution, which gives evolution its existence and its possibilities? This is the fundamental metaphysical problem where evolution has no answers to, and the idea of *the Blind Watchmaker* and the fundamental principle of coincidence (as highest power?) is somewhat deceiving in this matter: how can the process by itself rest on coincidence? Our way of thinking about reality presupposes a similarity between our mind and the reality; this is the only way science can actually work (and this is what Einstein called 'the incomprehensible comprehensibility of the universe). How is it, for instance, that his theory of relativity, worked out strictly with mathematical formulas, 'fits' reality? The success of his theory- which has since been demonstrated empirically- means that physical reality has the kind of mathematical structure Einstein worked out. Einstein didn't impose his theory on reality: he discovered it. The world was 'mind-like' before a mind like Einstein ever came long to see it....But why does his theory work? The success of his formula, and of all science, confirms our instinctive assumptions about the mind: our mind is more than a network of chemical reactions. It can rationally comprehend physical aspects of the world because the

---

<sup>19</sup> Berry 1988, p.139.

<sup>20</sup> Ham 1983, cited in Selkirk and Burrows, 1987:3.

world is rational. And since you can't have rationality without a rational mind- you can't have it by sheer chance-there must be a rational mind behind the physical world.<sup>21</sup> The only reasonable way we can think of the highest power in the universe is this way. The idea that nature could create creatures with desires which nature cannot fulfil, does not match with everything we know about the world.....

Looking at religion and evolution, creation and life, one does not need to be a philosopher to come to the conclusion that this world, this universe we are living in is in some way astonishing. Of course it is remarkable and beyond the scope of anything we can think of, that we are here *even if* it is a coincidence (unlikely as we have seen), *even if* we have no idea about the reason of all reasons. Still, man is in need for answers -he can't help himself-.

It is remarkable that men cannot help themselves stop believing, even after reading hours and hours of atheistic literature, scientific arguments for evolution, neuroscientific evidence for religion in the brain.... this is then the exact problem Darwinians mean. How can a healthy sane man belief? How can a healthy sane man be religious?

The answer does not lie in reason but in the heart, for that has its reasons witch reason does not know of, and this is probably the most true but on the same hand the most problematic answer which can be given. Kierkegaard has a beautiful illustration to this: "*Think of someone in love. Yes, he can talk day in day out about the bliss of being in love. But if someone were to demand that he speak and set forth three reasons that proved his love - or indeed, even that he defend his love - wouldn't he regard that as a crazy suggestion? Or, if he were a little shrewder, wouldn't he say to the person who suggested this to him, 'Aha! You certainly don't know what it is to be in love! And you're probably a bit convinced that I'm not.'*" [...] "*The only true way of expressing there is an absolute is to become its martyr or to become a martyr for its sake. That is even the way things are with respect to true romantic love.*"<sup>22</sup> This is also the case for belief. The true knowledge of belief lies in the heart and can never made clear to one who doesn't belief. The certainty of the belief can be compared with the certainty one has about his father. He cannot explain how he knows that his father is actually his father; it is a fact which cannot be doubted even though he cannot explain anyone why this fact is an absolute certain fact.

Looking than at evolution and psychology and its ideas and implications.... The mind sees all the evidence, and somehow decides, not knowing where it comes from, that it misses the essence of true imagination, it misses all the beauty....Is it in the end only a matter of sentiment then, not of philosophy? Why does the testimony of Dietrich Bonhoeffer fulfil with intense joy *-out of nothing-*, why does it make one *value* life reading the confessions of St. August, the thoughts of Pascal, Orthodoxy by C.K. Chesterton, the last writing of Thomas More, waiting for his death in the Tower of London....And why there is this sudden feeling of sadness that is overwhelming while reading Richard Dawkins, William Hamilton and Simon Blackburn? Because of prejudgement? I am convinced there is a deeper philosophical

---

<sup>21</sup> Compare Herman Berger (2001). *Evolutie en metafysica*. Budel: Damon.

<sup>22</sup> Joakim Garff (2005). *Soren Kierkegaard. A biography*. Princeton: University press.

meaning, but at the same time this deeper philosophical meaning can be always made relative by Darwinians. What use would it be if I should say that the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know? That we feel it in a thousand things? That the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and also itself naturally, according as it gives itself to them; and it hardens itself against one or the other at its will. It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. What use would it be if I should say that this, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason. What use would it be if I should say faith is a gift of God; do not believe that we said it was a gift of reasoning. What use would it be if I should say that the knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him? It is evident to me that one poem of T.S. Elliott is more valuable than a thousand pages of Darwinian analysis on the same poem, the use of it and in what deluded state Elliott must have been when he wrote that poem <sup>23</sup>.

From the point of view of Darwinians it doesn't matter what kind of arguments I give for being religious, since all arguments in favour of being religious are viewed as a way to ease the mind. The conclusion is that there is no possibility of coming together in the discussion between Christians for example and Darwinians, there isn't even a compromise. Philosophy certainly cannot help in this matter, except for only giving the conclusion that question is more valuable than answer and that the truth lies in metaphysics not in evolution.

What happened when suddenly time came into existence and to call nowadays nowadays? What is the force that gave the universe its shape it has today? The flowers, the moon, people passing by, music, our imagination..... *as if this once was nothing*. No matter what kind of science we do, no matter what kind of places we visited, these questions do not go away. I do not find it impossible to think that some people desperately would like to get rid of these kind of questions, simply because they are to obtrusive; and things which are obtrusive we normally try to get rid of, or evolution does.

The questions how did we get here, why are we what we are, how things work, are questions which can be answered to a certain extent by science. But if for instance the theory of evolution is trying to get answers on the meaning of life, the purpose of it or even telling us that religion is for the ignorant and the poor (like Dawkins), than evolution loses its purpose as a serious science.

Coming to conclusions is for a philosopher most of the time coming to new questions. What is especially in my interest as a religious philosopher and what really urges my mind are the following questions. If you are an evolutionist, I wonder with what eyes you look at the great stories of the great Saints. I wonder what it does to you when you read the remarkable overview John Henry Newman gave about martyrs<sup>24</sup>. I wonder how you think about things beyond the scope of evolution, about time, Moral and Max Planck's famous Wall for instance. I wonder what you do when you are really thankful, but there is nobody to thank. I wonder

---

<sup>23</sup> Compare Marc van Oostendorp (2003). *Taal is passie*. In Folkert Kuiken (red.) *Appel heeft het gedaan. Liber Amicorum for René Appel while leaving the Universiteit of Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.

<sup>24</sup> Newman, J.H. (1955). *An Essay in aid of a Grammar of Assent*. London: Longmans, Green en Co.

how *you* would create a civilization and a society with the veil of ignorance put forward by John Rawls <sup>25</sup>, I wonder if you have even ever read Romans before making conclusions about the state man being religious.

It is not so that evolution has no power at all, or is completely besides the truth -that is certainly not the conclusion of this article-, even as there is truth in neuroscience and the explanation of temporal lobe epilepsy for religious experiences. For instance the last one seems at first sight an interesting theory, and offers a way to look at religious experiences without the mystical aspect. But when we think a little further, some urging questions come to mind. What about Christ? What about St. August? What about St. Francis of Assisi? What about the followers of Christ, and so on? Where they all mad, did they all suffer from TLE? There is no evidence whatsoever to make this conclusion, there seems even to be more evidence for the opposite. Pascal has a classical argument for this: “*The supposition that the apostles were impostors is very absurd. Let us think it out. Let us imagine those twelve men, assembled after the death of Jesus Christ, plotting to say that He was risen. By this they attack all the powers. The heart of man is strangely inclined to fickleness, to change, to promises, to gain. However little any of them might have been led astray by all these attractions, nay more, by the fear of prisons, tortures, and death, they were lost. Let us follow up this thought.*”<sup>26</sup> Besides this, there are good reasons to apply the arguments that the science gives for the fact that religion and religious experiences are caused by diseases to scientist itself. The French philosopher Jean Guitton gives a great example in his book *Dieu et la science* <sup>27</sup> where a physical theorist and evolutionist took a peak at the other side of the Wall of Planck. When Guitton asked him what he has seen, after a short hesitation the man replied he had seen a stunning reality, where the structure of the space had sank away in an amazing powerful field of gravitation, and time fell back from future to the past and finally exploded in ten thousands of moments equal to eternity..... See, what this scientist had seen on the other side of the Wall, he spoke of it as it was some sort of metaphysical hallucination, which had marked him forever.....

What counts for neuropsychology and neurophysiology counts for evolution. It has a certain truth in it and it uses scientific measurement, but to my opinion it goes one step to far when it excludes religion from transcendentality and labels it as just a state of the mind. So in this article, it is my philosophical conclusion that the greatest side effect of the theory of evolution is the inclination to give metaphysical answers and make one's way out of the scope of science, or at least, it is its greatest false attraction.

Philosopher J.P. Moreland, in his book, *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation* (1989) aims to refute scientific imperialism argument by argument. To this aim, Moreland defends three theses: (1) that there is no definition of science or single scientific method that we may use to demarcate science from non-science; (2) that certain epistemological limits (e.g. the presuppositions of science) dethrone science from an

---

<sup>25</sup> Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>26</sup> Blaise Pascal (1670). *Pensées*. Translated out of French by W.F. Trotter. Edition Léon Brunschvicg (1958). New York: Dover.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Guitton (1991). *Dieu et la science*. Paris: édition Grasset.

imperialistic stance over philosophy and theology; and (3) that attempts to integrate science and theology (especially conflicts) should not automatically assume *scientific realism*, the view that successful scientific theories are true or approximately true models of the world.

He makes a point that is very important for us to consider. It's about the notion which he calls an external conceptual problem. Science, especially evolutionary science, as a vehicle for truth, comes to the conclusion that man has no worth or value, nothing unique, no ultimate dignity. You have to invent it. You can't get it from the natural world. But, as Moreland argues, we have reason to believe that man is more than just the sum of his parts. He is not just physical, he is not just a creature that has no special place in the universe. Moral motions mean something. There does seem to be a morality that applies to human beings. Human beings do seem to have a qualitative value different than everything else.

If there is good reason, whether theological or philosophical, to argue for the fact that human beings are not just simply the blind concepts of an uncaring universe, then those become arguments against this scientific point of view. In other words, they become what Moreland calls an external conceptual problem. It's a problem that is external to the discipline of science, but an argument that has merits in itself, even though it is not a scientific argument, strictly speaking, and therefore ought to be allowed to weigh in against the so-called conclusions of science.

Another way of saying it is, a good philosophical or theological argument is a legitimate rebuttal to a scientific argument that comes to an opposing conclusion. Now, of course, this is an appeal to open the field and let other disciplines play in the search for truth other than simply science. Once we do that, it changes the game considerably....

Of course there are still other conclusions to be made. The Christian can fool himself with the idea of God; the evolutionist can fool himself with the idea of value of a different sort. But both are merely fooling *us* because in the real world there is nothing like genuine value or dignity. None of it really matches reality. But, I think, ones has to come up with serious alternative arguments before making these kinds of conclusions.

Men found that they were able to explain much through reason, but the larger philosophical questions proved to be too great. In addition, they discovered that there were many questions that could not be answered by reason alone. Some of these questions were: How did everything begin? Why is there something rather than nothing? What happens to us after we die? These questions are traditionally answered by theology, and the answers usually included an appeal to a divine being called God. Francis Schaeffer explained in a book called *Escape from Reason* (1977) that modern man has become schizoid in his thinking. He has split the world into two areas. He called it the upper story and the lower story. The lower story was the natural world, the mechanized world of cause and effect. In the upper story you have meaning and significance, values and morality, the world of religion, the world of God, the world of faith. We should not mix them up, like evolutionary science intends to.

What we need to do is to remain focused on the truth and not easily say that there is no meaning if life, that religion has no meaning or use and is just 'opium', that everything is a coincidence and evolution is the only thing that makes sense. That stops further thinking, and one should have lost than every feeling in his body if he is not interested in *why* he is here and takes the conclusions from evolution for granted.