

# DOWNLOAD PDF THE PARTICIPATORY NATURE OF MODERN SCIENCE AND JUDAIC-CHRISTIAN THEISM

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*The Participatory Nature of Modern Science & Judaic-Christian Theism (IBRI Research Reports Book 20) - Kindle edition by W. Jim Neidhardt. Download it once and read it on your Kindle device, PC, phones or tablets.*

JASA 36 June Descartes and Galileo were instrumental in starting modern science by their commitment to a method of investigation in which the detached observer first observes and then manipulates physical reality. This paradigm of detachment has been the model for scientific objectivity despite its inability to function well when applied to the social sciences and the fact that the creative researcher in the physical sciences often ignores its rules by allowing himself or herself to be guided by non-detached intellectual passions; that is personal and community scientific standards of rational beauty, unity, and simplicity. This newly emerging paradigm of active participation has a number of striking implications for and resonances with Judaic-Christian theism. These implications and resonances are explored. These two traditions are very different and rather unrelated kinds of truth, and increasingly, in our science-dominated culture, scientific truth is taken as the only valid truth with its image of only the detached observer obtaining truly objective knowledge. From this positivistic perspective the scientist emerges as detached from the object of his investigation, his personal worldview as represented by his aesthetic, philosophical and religious commitments playing no role in his interrogation of the external object world what figure 1 calls THE OTHER. Furthermore his world view, his many personal commitments are not enhanced and altered due to his interactions with external reality. The origins of this fatal dualism can be traced back to the sixteenth century philosopher Descartes, who saw as the starting point for all philosophy the self-consciousness of the rational mind, the awareness by the thinking mind of its own activity constituting both the sufficient and necessary ground of existence. From this fact Descartes worked outward "to prove" the existence of God with the fatal flaw that the existence of God then depends upon the existence of the self. The mind, by formulating clear and distinct ideas based upon geometry, can discover truth about physical reality that possesses certitude. Thus by this "atomistic" method of subdividing a thing into its smallest components, knowledge is gained in a mechanical fashion which possesses the certitude of geometric theorems, the chain of reasoning used in the investigation of the physical world subdivide, measure, combine being similar to those chains of reasoning which geometers use in proving theorems. Note that the aim of such investigatory method is to produce knowledge that is certain, free of all risk; it is very different from the type of knowledge one would gain in personal relationships. What presuppositions does it hide, for Descartes did not recognize his own tacitly-held presuppositions? I think therefore I exist is not grounded in a rational argument but is existentially grasped. Thus Descartes is a primary originator of existential philosophy. Reality has only two categories-the egocentric knowing self and the object world which it knows. All reality other than self is objective. The object world is defined as that which is known by me. God, other persons, rocks are alike-the objects of my knowledge. Thus my knowing activity is emphasized as opposed to the nature of the other which is known or its activity. The activity of self is defined only in terms of knowing and thinking. It is not enriched or altered by relationships with the other including, most importantly, personal relationships. It rejects as illegitimate for philosophy the identification of the self as I am he who trusts or believes. Absolutely certain proof arising from the autonomous self poses impossible tasks for philosophy. How do we know that our knowledge is objective and not merely a product of our imagination? How do we certify the reality of the world? How can we reach certainty? Any problem that does not yield certainty is rejected as meaningless. The Cartesian self is God. All authority for knowledge stems from the ego. Figure 1 schematically portrays the Cartesian dualism. Man as a person is removed from his own world and replaced by an automaton acting under determinate laws. Detachment, from this perspective, is the main characteristic of scientific objectivity. But recent studies of scientific method and scientific creativity have revealed this method of detachment originating from Descartes is a caricature of how scientists really go about making actual scientific discoveries. This perspective of

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science as an activity of detached observers has been successfully challenged by Michael Polanyi in his masterful book *Personal Knowledge*<sup>5</sup> and many other works. He has tacitly learned, from the behavior of things and relationships shared with other persons, aesthetic and moral commitments which guide him in his exploration of and encounter with external reality. The necessity of commitment as an integral component of scientific activity is beautifully summarized by Thomas F. Torrance, a leading interpreter of Polanyi: Michael Polanyi has insisted that we must recognize belief or intuitive apprehension once more as the source of knowledge from which our acts of discovery take their rise, for it is in belief W. His professional interests are in quantum physics; systems theory; and the integration of scientific, philosophical, and religious perspectives, all being forms of personal knowledge as ably pointed out by the scientist-philosopher, Michael Polanyi. He is also interested in the problems of educationally deprived college-bound students and has taught a college level integrated physics-calculus course for Newark high school seniors. Behind and permeating all our scientific activity, whether in critical analysis or discovery, there is an elemental, overwhelming faith in the rational constitution of things, but faith also in the possibility of grasping the real world with our concepts, and above all faith in the truth over which we have no control but in the service of which our rationality stands or falls. Faith and intrinsic rationality are interlocked with one another. Science does not operate from an axiomatic set of formally defined and verified propositions, as the positivists claim, but from ultimate informal assumptions which cannot be proved or refuted and which cannot be completely formalized, yet without implicit reliance on them would be no scientific knowledge at all. As examples of these ultimate assumptions we may refer to belief in truth or belief in the lawfulness of nature, neither of which we could prove for we would have to assume them in any attempted proof, but both of them are nevertheless all determining constituents in our fundamental frame of belief, affecting the entire shape and scope of our scientific activities and their results as well. Hence Polanyi insisted that the premises of science on which all its inquiry rests are the beliefs held by scientists on the intelligible nature of reality independent of themselves and its capacity to disclose itself in an indeterminate range of yet unknown and perhaps even unthinkable ways. Far from being subjective or irrational these beliefs have to do with the structural kinship between the knowing subject and the objective reality he seeks to know, and they arise in his mind as intuitive convictions which he cannot reasonably avoid for they are thrust upon him as elemental aspects of reality pressing for realization in his understanding. In science one trusts in an integrated conceptual framework of interacting basic presuppositions, theories, and models concerning external reality. Now the knower is no longer a detached observer but an active participator through his commitments to the portion of reality being explored. Lastly, absolutely certain, risk-free knowledge is not possible for finite human knowers according to Polanyi but risk is minimized as the knower responsibly commits himself to reality that is outside himself THE OTHER. Objectivity is now based upon the common agreements of communities of knowers deeply and responsibly committed to their respective disciplines. For detailed documentation with many examples of the role commitment plays in all aspects of scientific knowledge see *Personal Knowledge*. The participatory nature of modern scientific method is clearly brought out by the method outlined by one of our greatest modern scientists, Albert Einstein; his scientific method contrasting sharply with that of Descartes. On the basis of nothing more than physical intuition and intellectual convictions, the scientist makes an intuitive leap, a jump of imaginative insight, from the realm of experience to abstracting a system of axioms. This is a conceptual jump far beyond where any experiment could check it and before any supporting evidence was available. Finally, once a system of axioms is established, the axioms are used to deduce specific theoretical results capable of being experimentally checked. Thus one is brought back to the realm of experience. If experiments do not agree with the theoretical results, the system of axioms on which they are based is considered faulty and must be modified or a completely new set of axioms created. This vulnerability of the system of axioms to falsification is in keeping with positivist views of science; but the intuitive or imaginative jump from experience to the set of axioms is contrary to all positive dogma. The scientist cannot rationally deduce the system of axioms from experience, since it transcends experience. Only an act of inspired imagination can create the system of axioms; to quote

Einstein: The Participatory Universe Figure 2. Such detachment is no longer possible when one attempts to observe a microscopic quantum object like an electron as the physicist John Wheeler forcefully points out: In contrast, quantum mechanics teaches the direct opposite. It is impossible to observe even so miniscule an object as an electron without in effect smashing that slab and reaching in with the appropriate measuring equipment. Moreover, the installation of apparatus to measure the position coordinate,  $x$ , of the electron automatically prevents the insertion in the same region at the same time of the equipment that would be required to measure its velocity or its momentum,  $P$ ; and conversely. The act of measurement typically produces an unpredictable change in the state of the electron. This change is different according as one measures the position or the momentum. The choice one makes about what he observes makes an irretrievable difference in what he finds. In some strange sense this is a participatory universe. Or, as many physicists currently interpret the mathematical formalism of quantum mechanics, reality is in part created by the observer through his participation! Quantum reality is still rational but no longer visualizable in the sense in which the behavior of a baseball is visualizable to a human being. This quantum rationality requires that participation rather than detachment be an essential part of the perception of physical reality at the quantum level atomic and subatomic systems. The quantum realm does not exist in a definite state until one actually sets up an apparatus and observes it. To summarize, quantum physics differs from classical physics in two fundamental ways. First, quantum reality is not deterministic in its behavior; our perception of quantum reality is fundamentally indeterminant in structure. Secondly, the world of quantum objects is not objective like the Figure 3. Double-line arrows--Process embedded in personal judgements and commitments. Single-line arrows--Process completely logical, automatic. E-- Plane" of sense experience. A-- A system of axioms. J-- Jump of imaginative insight: ET--Experimental testing against experience. It is not out there, existing independently of our observing it; what is "there" in the quantum realm depends in part on what we choose to see--reality is partially created by the observer. Thus the observer can no longer detach himself from what he is observing; participation with the object being observed must, in principle, be part of the observation process. Not necessarily, for as J. How does realism survive for the elusive protean objects of quantum theory which are not the carriers of picturable quantities like position and momentum but only in a famous phrase of Heisenberg the potentiality for such quantities? In the end I feel the touchstone of reality is not sensibility or picturability but intelligibility. The quantum world for all its peculiarity and elusiveness is real because we are able to gain understanding of it. If this emphasis upon intelligibility as the key to reality is correct then it gives physics an important common ground with theology, as the latter attempts the more difficult task of understanding the ways of God with man. Thus the new perspective emphasizes that the intelligibility of physical objects exists and acts independently of scientists and their activity. A recent development in cosmology further emphasizes what quantum mechanics has stressed: It is easy to imagine a universe quite different from the observed one. For example, changing the physical constants might give rise to a universe where the chemical elements heavier than helium are never formed or where all stars are large, hot and short-lived. In most such imaginary reconstructions of the universe it is unlikely that an intelligent form of life would appear. The fact that the real universe does harbor intelligent observers therefore places certain constraints on the diversity of ways the universe could have begun and on the physical laws that could have governed its development. In other words, the universe has the properties we observe today because if its earlier properties had been much different, we would not be here as observers now. The principle underlying this method of cosmological analysis has been called the anthropic principle, from the Greek *anthropos*, man. It should be pointed out that there is a wide spectrum of data to back up the arguments that led to the formulation of the anthropic principle.

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## Chapter 2 : Project MUSE - The Orders of Nature

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Social Science Perspectives, ed. Unfortunately this movement is often mistaken as an occult uprising, antiscientific, and a belief in the irrational. Many reasons could be given, and have been Capra, a; Ferguson, , as to why this area has continued to gain the interest of countless authors and larger audiences. Historian Theodore Roszak has put forth the view that the emergence of these books, articles and the rising culture surrounding them is the indication of a great religious appetite, reaching out into areas that are not traditionally religious in character Roszak, n. Since then my world perspective has been greatly influenced by the eminent physicist David Bohm, a student of Einstein. Bohm and Weber, a; Schroll, a; Weber, According to Bohm, this new metaphysics would rest upon the premise that the universe is an undivided wholeness. This undivided wholeness, this transcendental source-ground is, says Bohm, the fundamental Reality and through a cyclic process of projection, injection, re-projection, this primary Reality gives rise to a secondary reality, the manifest world of sensory phenomena. Furthermore, Bohm believes the present worldview of Western science is maintained through the self-deceptive fragmentary division of subjectivity and objectivity. Believing that Bohm was essentially correct in his plea for a new metaphysics and sensing great confusion stemming from efforts to retain the traditional objective-subjective dichotomy in Western thought, I wondered, could developments in the modern physics movement provide a more adequate philosophical foundation for the social and behavioral sciences? The developments of the modern physics movement have already had a profound effect upon the worldview of physics as well as the physicists themselves. Indeed, as the profoundly shocking ontological and epistemological developments of the new physics come to be more fully understood by social and behavioral scientists, their paradigm will also undergo a transformation Schroll, b. Niels Bohr argues that those who are not at first shocked by quantum mechanics do not understand it. Contrary to the view of classical science, the ontological position of the new physics is not to prove or disprove the reality of objective phenomena. Rather, the ontology of the new physics cannot be separated from its epistemology, because the purpose of the new physics is to track down, as precisely as possible, the relationship between the manifold aspects of the world of phenomenological events the observed and the symbolic construction of these phenomenological events as they are experienced by the observer. Thus, an important thesis of this article is that emergent phenomenological reality is inextricably entwined with the act of measurement, which implies participation, as opposed to the classical scientific stance of passive observation. Therefore, emergent reality can neither exist apart from nor prior to the act of measurement, but is in fact the act of measurement itself. The participatory ethos of new age thinking which underscores emergent phenomenological reality can serve to heal the fragmentary metaphysics and methodological reductionism of Western science. However, it should not be seen as a panacea for the ills of humanity. It will be the responsibility of humanity as a whole to help heal the split between the sacred and the secular, and help to bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and modern science. The Historical Overview of Modern Physics Some came for the reasons some came along for the ride some knew what they needed others needed time to decide. The first of a new breed standing on a new frontier seeking direction when a voice came through loud and clearâ€” Open your eyes up to the ways of the world [universe]. Volquardsen and Phillip C. Potter musicians and songwriters, Lincoln, Nebraska, It is appropriate to begin our historical overview of modern physics with Lord Kelvin, one of the leading theoretical physicists of the nineteenth century, and his view of the state of classical physics as summarized by Bohm: He therefore advised young men not to go into this field because further work would only be a matter of confirming the next few decimal points. He did however mention two small clouds on the horizon. These were the negative results of the Michelson-Morely experiment and the difficulties of understanding quantized [sic, blackbody] radiation. We must admit that Lord Kelvin was able to choose his clouds properly. These

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were precisely the points of departure for the developments of relativity and quantum theory. The Michelson-Morley experiment, conducted in 1887, was designed to measure the ether breeze. The ether was believed to be a corpuscular web that extended throughout the universe and served as the invisible medium through which light propagated itself. The Michelson-Morley experiment failed to detect the ether. Various explanations to account for why the ether had not been detected began to emerge. However, it took the bold statement by a young scientist named Albert Einstein to declare eighteen years later that the ether was not detected because the ether does not exist! Ironically, it was his work on blackbody radiation that helped to change all this. The word blackbody is a bit of a misnomer, as the word blackbody also denotes an object capable of turning heat energy into electromagnetic radiation—such as the sun. Thus a second seemingly unanswerable problem emerged for nineteenth-century physicists when their predictions of blackbody radiation in terms of classical thermodynamics produced results indicating that blackbodies at very high temperatures and short wavelengths contained infinite amounts of energy. This bold conclusion was published in 1901 by the same young physicist who had denied the existence of the ether, Albert Einstein. This also marked the beginning of the many quantum paradoxes. Although the hypothesis of light quanta or photons appeared to explain the experimental results of the photoelectric effect, Einstein, like Planck before him, balked at his own discovery; this dual personality of light made as much sense to classical physicists as saying that stones are also steam. Early in the twentieth century, from his research on radioactivity, Ernest Rutherford had proposed that the atom was like a tiny solar system—having a massive central core of protons surrounded by orbiting electrons of lighter density. His first clue to this question came from optical spectroscopy, the science of studying atomic spectra. When an atom emits energy, light is given off, forming the so-called emission spectrum. When energy is absorbed by an atom, a negative image of the emission spectrum—the absorption spectrum—is formed. Furthermore, this optical spectrum of a chemical element such as hydrogen acts as an identifiable pattern—much like a fingerprint. Despite this, the paradox of the dual nature of light had yet to be properly addressed. Fortunately for science and humanity, there are those who listen to an inner voice, choosing to march to a different drummer. This healthy young voice of objection came from Werner Heisenberg, who, along with his friend Wolfgang Pauli, began to notice some irregularities in the Bohr atom. However, these experimental and computational objections were overshadowed by an insight that was to help produce the next visionary breakthrough. While older physicists felt content with this hybrid, the compromise seemed unsatisfactory to the two [young] students. Social and behavioral scientists have a valuable lesson to learn from scientists such as Pauli and Heisenberg. Unlike Planck and Einstein, they were not afraid to question the scientific dogma of practical realism or positivistic science. Instead they trusted their own intuitive insight. Following the completion of his thesis on hydrodynamics, Heisenberg took an academic post at the University of Göttingen. It was at this time that Heisenberg turned his full attention to the structure of the atom. But his progress toward finding any sort of solution was impeded as a result of his teaching schedule. Ironically, as a result of a severe hay fever attack toward the end of May 1925, he was freed from his teaching responsibilities for two weeks. To recover from his illness, Heisenberg retired to the pollen-free island of Helgoland. Here, free from interruptions, he made rapid progress. Guided by his inner vision of how things ought to go, he developed an algebraic method based on his observation of atomic spectra to account for the energy fluctuations of electrons in the Bohr atom. This method came to be known as matrix mechanics. I reached a point where I was ready to determine the individual terms in the energy table, or, as we put it today, in the energy matrix. When the first terms seemed to accord with the energy principle, I became rather excited, and I began to make countless arithmetical errors. At first, I was deeply alarmed. I had the feeling that through the surface of atomic phenomena I was looking at a strangely beautiful interior, and I felt almost giddy at the thought that I now had to probe this wealth of mathematical structures nature had so generously spread out before me. I was far too excited to sleep. Exhausted from his efforts and still unsure if his paper really made sense, Heisenberg sent a copy to his old friend Pauli, who, after reviewing it, was enthusiastic. In support of his work on wave mechanics,

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Schroedinger received in April the following letters from Einstein and Planck respectively: I am convinced that you have made a decisive advance with your formulation of the quantum condition, just as I am equally convinced that the Heisenberg-Born route is off the track. I read your article the way an inquisitive child listens in suspense to the solution of a puzzle that he has been bothered about for a long time, and I am delighted with the beauties that are evident to the eye. Quoted in Briggs and Peat, But, as history shows, this was not to be the case. Imagine that an individual atom is a deck of cards and a specific energy level of that atom corresponds to a specific poker hand dealt from the deck. The theory does not predict the outcome of a particular deal. Demanding this latter kind of determinism requires looking into the deck—cheating. According to Born, the de Broglie-Schroedinger wave function specifies the probability that an atom will have a specific energy level just as the theory of card playing specifies the probability of a certain hand. Classical physics, in contrast to the new quantum theory, claimed to be able to predict the outcome of such specific measurements. The new quantum theory denies that such individual events can be determined. Here we see for the first time the new idea of causality in quantum theory—it is probability that is causally determined into the future, not individual events. These two approaches were eventually shown to be mathematically equivalent by the transformation theory of British physicist Paul Dirac. Pagels continues this analogy by saying: Suppose someone describes a tree in the English language while someone else describes it in Arabic. The English and Arabic descriptions are different symbolic representations of the same object. If you want to describe the tree, you must pick at least one language or representation. Once you have one representation you can find the others by the rules of translation or transformation. That is how it is in the mathematical description of quantum objects like electrons. Some representations emphasize the wavelike properties, others the particlelike properties, but it is always the same entity that is being represented. It is by varying the symbolic representations through transformations that we arrive at the notion of invariants: Invariants establish the true structure of an object. Together these two approaches came to be known as quantum mechanics or quantum theory. The Bohr-Schroedinger debate had failed to solve the conceptual differences between wave mechanics and matrix mechanics. This perplexing polemic weighed heavily on Heisenberg, who in his discussions with Bohr concerning this issue became nearly overwrought with despair. Heisenberg struggled to make sense of the absurdities of this quantum paradox, until finally the psychological trauma triggered an insight so profound that scientists today are still discussing the full impact of its implications. In its most simple exposition, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle states: The closer we try to measure the position of a quantum object, the more uncertain becomes its momentum. It seems the very act of observation or measurement changes the system. The pre-Heisenbergian scientist is metaphorically seated behind a half-silvered mirror, a spectator to nature, observing things as they really are. With the uncertainty principle, as physicist John Wheeler was later to put it, the scientist smashed through that imaginary window separating him from nature. While Bohr agreed with the basic view of the uncertainty principle, he believed this notion was part of a more basic ontology of the cosmos.

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## Chapter 3 : Human Nature, Religious and Philosophical Aspects | racedaydvl.com

*Science in Christian Perspective. Letter to the Editor. Further Reflections on "The Participatory Nature Of Modern Science and Judaic-Christian Theism" (JASA, 36, 2, June, , pp. ).*

See Article History Theism, the view that all limited or finite things are dependent in some way on one supreme or ultimate reality of which one may also speak in personal terms. In Judaism , Christianity , and Islam , this ultimate reality is often called God. This article explores approaches to theism in Western theology and philosophy. Deism Deism closely resembles theism, but for the deist God is not involved in the world in the same personal way. God has made it, so to speak, or set the laws of itâ€”and to that extent he sustains it in being. But God, as the deist sees him, allows the world to continue in its own way, subject to this final and somewhat remote control. This view simplifies some problems, especially those that arise from the scientific account of the world: God is in the shadows or beyond, and, though people may still in some way centre their lives upon him, this calls for no radical adjustment at the human or finite level. The deist proceeds, for most purposes at least, as if there were no Godâ€”or only an absent one. This is why deism appealed so much to thinkers in the time of the first triumphs of modern science. Religion, being wholly superadded, was significant only in a manner that involved little else in the world or in human life. Theism, pantheism , and monism Theism sharply contrasts with pantheism, which identifies God with all that there is, and with various forms of monism , which regards all finite things as parts, modes, limitations, or appearances of some one ultimate Being, which is all that there is. Some types of absolute Idealism , a philosophy of all-pervading Mind, while regarding every finite thing as comprising some limitation of the one whole of Being, seek also to retain the theistic element in their view of the world. They do this normally by stressing the role of unifying finite centres, such as self-conscious human beings, in the way the universe as a whole functions. Theism and mysticism Mysticism in practice comes close to theism, but mystical thought and much of its practice have often involved a repudiation of the proper reality of finite things and sometimes tends to dismiss all of the finite manifold or multiplicity of things as some wholly unreal phantasm that has no place in the one undiversified Being, which alone is real. Theism is very far removed from ideas of this kind. The personal God and the world The idea that the world, as humanity understands it in a finite way, is dependent on some reality altogether beyond human comprehension, perfect and self-sustained but also peculiarly involved in the world and its events, is presented with exceptional sharpness and discernment in the Hebrew Bible , whence it became a formative influence in Jewish history and subsequently in Christianity and Islam. Moses wished to see God , to have some explicit sign that could convince the people and establish his own authority, but he was shown instead that this is just what he could not have. All that he could be assured of was that God is real and is bound to be: On the other hand, in the throes of this humbling and staggering experience, Moses began to learn also what was expected of him and how his people should live and be led. This claim presents the reflective thinker with the twofold problem of theism: Intellectual background There have been many attempts to establish the existence of one supreme and ultimate Beingâ€”whom in religion one speaks of as Godâ€”and some of these have been given very precise forms in the course of time. The influence of Plato and Aristotle The pattern for many of these was laid down in ancient Greece by Plato. He taught about God mostly in mythical terms, stressing the goodness of God as in the Republic and Timaeus and his care for human beings as in the Phaedo. But in the Phaedrus , and much more explicitly in the Laws , he presented a more rigorous argument, based on the fact that things change and are in motion. Whether God so conceived quite gives the traditional theist all that he wants, however, is not certain. Aristotle made the argument from motion more precise, but he coupled it with a doubtful astronomical view and a less theistic notion of God, who, as the unmoved mover, is the ultimate source of all other movement, not by expressly communicating it but by being a supreme object of aspiration , all appetite and activity being in fact directed to some good. Aristotle thus set the pattern for the more deistic view of God, whereas the theist, taken in the strict sense, turns more for his

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start and inspiration to Plato. The causal argument The argument for the existence of God inferred from motion was given a more familiar form in the first of the Five Ways of St. Thomas Aquinas , five major proofs of God that also owed much to the emphasis on the complete transcendence of God in the teaching of Plotinus , the leading Neoplatonist of the 3rd century ce, and his followers. In the first way, Aquinas put forward the view that all movement implies, in the last analysis, an unmoved mover, and, though this argument as he understood it presupposes certain views about movement and physical change that may not be accepted today, it does make the main point that finite processes call for some ground or condition other than themselves. As normally found, the idea of efficient causality, in respect to change and process, has many difficulties, and some would prefer to speak instead of regular or necessary sequence. But a more serious objection stresses the apparent inconsistency of thinkers who invoke a general principle of causality and then exempt the alleged first cause. Thomas, or at least of the present approach to the idea of God, would reply that the first cause is not supposed to be itself a member of any ordinary causal sequence but altogether beyond it, an infinite reality not itself a part of the natural or temporal order at all. This point, in fact, is what the third way , starting from the contingency of the world, brings out more explicitly. Nothing explains itself, and all other explanations fall short of showing in any exhaustive way why anything is as it is or why there is anything at all. But it is also hard to suppose that things just happen to be. Nothing could come out of just nothing, and so the course of events as humans find and explain them points to some reality that is not itself to be understood or explained in the normal way at all: The ontological argument Scholars have often converged upon the same theme in what appears to be a very different line of argument, namely the ontological one, with which are associated especially the names of St. Proponents of this argument try to show that the very idea of God implies his existence. God is the being none greater than which can be conceived. Other things equal, a thing that has the attribute of existence is greater than a thing that does not. Thus, if God did not exist, it would be possible to conceive a being greater than him: Others find in the argument an oblique and needlessly elaborate way of eliciting the feeling that there must be some reality that exists by the very necessity of its own nature and to which everything else directs human thought. National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland Arguments from value and design Attempts to arrive at the idea of God in somewhat more comprehensible terms are reflected in the references to value and design in the fourth and fifth ways of Aquinas. This approach, however, has been given a more explicit presentation and critical discussion in the works of the 18th-century Scottish skeptic David Hume and of Kant. The main idea of the argument from design or teleological argument is that of the worth and purpose, or apparent design, to be found in the world. This purposiveness is taken to imply a supreme Designer. It has been questioned, however by Kant, for example , whether this argument can really get started without presupposing some feature of the causal argument. The presence of seemingly purposeless features of the world and of much that is positively bad, like wickedness and suffering , while always embarrassing for a theistic view, presents peculiar difficulties here, for the arguer is now throwing hostages to fortune in the shape of a special assessment of the way things actually happen, which goes far beyond the mere requirement of some ultimate ground, whatever the world appears to be like. The arguments from worth and design have, however, one considerable advantage: The supreme Designer or Architect is known from his works, especially perhaps as reflected in the lives of human beings, and this approach opens up one way of speaking of God, not just as mysterious power behind the world but as some reality whom humans may come to know in a personal way from the way the world goes and from their understanding of what it means. For a contemporary version of the argument from design, see intelligent design. Tennant, a philosophical theologian. But the work of thinkers like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin , a Jesuit paleoanthropologist, and the spate of discussion that he provoked are also relevant here, and such work in turn owes muchâ€”directly or otherwiseâ€”to the work of evolutionary thinkers like Samuel Alexander and Henri Bergson and of 20th-century scientists like Julian Huxley. The problem of particular knowledge of God If the central theme of traditional theism, that the finite world depends in some way on one transcendent and infinite Being, can be sustained, then a crucial problem presents itself at once: Part of the answer is that the theist does

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not claim to fathom the ultimate mystery of God or to know him as he is in himself. All that is claimed on this score is that humans see the inevitability of there being God in the contingent and limited character of everything else. Though this line of thought could not be adopted for any finite existence—since one could not normally affirm in any sensible way the existence of anything without specifying in some measure, however slight, what it is like—one can, nonetheless, regard the case of God as unique and not subject to the conditions of finite intelligibility. In these ways, an insight or intuition into the being of God may be claimed without a commitment to anything about his nature beyond the sort of completeness or perfection required to account for there being limited finite things. Theism and natural theology Theists have tried to deal with this problem in various ways. One of them is their use of the doctrine of analogy, which owes a great deal to the teaching of Aquinas. The difficulty with this procedure is that, whatever it yields, the content of faith is still very thin and remote, far from the warm fellowship of personal relations. Theism, in fact, is hardly conceivable without some doctrine of revelation. But even if the theologian says that God takes the initiative in communicating himself to people, the epistemological problem remains of how the essentially finite human mind can apprehend anything pertaining to infinite or eternal Being. Theism and religious experience At this point, recourse is sometimes had to authority, the authority of a sacred book, an institution, or a system of doctrines or one of divinely implanted images. But there must at least be some initial justification of an authority, to say nothing of an evaluation of rival claims. A more attractive solution, then, especially for those who stress the personal involvement of God in the lives of human beings, is one posed in terms of religious experience. Such experience is usually given prominence in theistic contexts. It is sometimes understood in terms of paranormal phenomena, like hearing voices or seeing visions, which have no natural origin, or like being in some peculiar psychical state. Some of the faithful believe that God literally speaks to them or spoke in times past to prophets in this way. A more subtle view holds that people have reason to regard certain experiences as their clue to what they should say of God in his relation to them. The question then arises of how these experiences should be recognized, and various answers are given, such as that which stresses the formative influence within such experiences of the initial insight into the being of God and the patterning of the experiences, in themselves and in wider ramifications, as a result. Much use is made in this context of the analogy with limitations on the knowledge that individual human beings may have of each other. In the molding and perpetuating of such experiences, prominence is given to imagination and to the place of figurative terms and symbolism. These forms therefore have a place of special importance in theistic types of religion, the personal encounter being extended and deepened through art and literature, song, dance, myth, and ritual. This fact in turn presents problems for thought and practice, since the art forms and ritual must not be allowed to take wing on their own and thereby be loosed from the discipline and direction of the proper dynamic of religious life. Theism and religious language Preoccupation with the forms in which religious life expresses itself has led some theistic writers to lean heavily on the contribution made to religious understanding today by studies of religious language. In some cases this concern has carried with it, as it generally did in much linguistic philosophy of the mid-century, a skeptical or agnostic view of the transcendent factor in religion. It is hard to see, however, how attenuations of this kind could be strictly regarded as forms of theism, though clearly, within their more restricted scope, they can retain many of the other characteristics of theism, such as the stress on personal involvement and response. This tendency is very marked in some recent studies of religion, in which the inspiration and form of theism are retained without the substance—though how long and how properly are moot points. There are others who, while retaining the transcendent reference of theism, look for the solution of the central problem less in the substance of religious awareness and in varieties of experience than in the modes of articulation and religious language. Controversy centres to a great degree on which of these approaches is the most fruitful. The nature of God Theism and incarnation The core of human personality has often been thought to be human moral existence, and, accordingly, theists have often taken this fact to be the main clue to the way they are to think of divine perfection and to the recognition of a peculiar divine involvement in the world. Prominence is thus accorded to

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the high ethical teaching and character of saints and prophets, who have a special role to play in transmitting the divine message. In some religions this tendency culminates in doctrines of incarnation, of God manifesting himself expressly in refined or perfected human form. Islam, on the other hand, centres on a transcendent personal deity yet envisions the holiness and majesty of God in such a way that it rejects incarnational doctrines as a form of blasphemy. However, it sometimes represents actions by a human individual as the action of God within him. This identification of humanity with God is most evident in the mysticism of the Sufis, yet in its devotional and emotional dimensions it also accords with theism. Incarnational claims seem certainly to take their place easily in some main forms of theism. The vindication of such claims, however, relies much on consideration of the personal factor in religion generally. For these and related reasons, the theist may find himself calling to his aid certain other disciplines that centre upon the person, such as psychology and anthropology. Not all of the forms and findings of these studies favour the theist, and he should take special note of their challenge when they seem hostile, for they may touch him at his tenderest spot. He may, on the other hand, find in such studies, and certain general literature that borders on kindred themes, substantial help in reconstructing his case in the full context of contemporary thought and culture. Humanism and transcendence It is indeed from certain modern studies of human beings and their environment that some of the most disturbing challenges to the theist have come. It has been argued that the very idea of God, as well as the more specific forms that it takes, emanates from human emotional needs for succour and comfort. People themselves, it is said, have created God in their own image, and the attempt is made to substantiate this view from accounts of the human proclivity, especially in early times, to personify natural objects—rivers, trees, mountains, and so forth—and, in due course, to confer peculiar properties upon them, leading in time to the notion of some superbeing in whom these powers and properties are concentrated. The classical statement of this position appeared before the development of anthropology and the modern systematic study of religions. Tylor, a British ethnologist and anthropologist, in his *Primitive Culture*, and by Sir James Frazer, an ethnographer and historian of religion, in his *Golden Bough*—

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## Chapter 4 : Theism | religion | racedaydvl.com

*Science in Christian Perspective. The Participatory Nature of Modern Science and Judaic-Christian Theism W. JIM NEIDHARDT Physics Department New Jersey Institute of Technology.*

Sam Webster has serious tech credentials. He has lived for decades in the San Francisco Bay area, a techie Mecca. Back in the early s, before most people had even heard of the Internet, he was writing code for some of the early sites on the World Wide Web. They decided to establish a permanent chapter in northern California. At the same time, Webster and his fellows were itching to remake themselves. The group also wanted to incorporate practices from other mainstream faiths, include women in their mix, and, perhaps most important, put a mechanism in place to make room for good ideas in the future. The first is religion, a common set of practices, rituals, and beliefs. Most websites or blogs are not open source, because even when the pages change frequently, a handful of people at most make all the changes. Wikipedia is open source because many people collaborate to produce one common text. The best-known example of open-source software is Linux, an operating system released in by a Finn name Linus Torvalds. And by many measures Linux performs better than its for-profit competitors: They can download a patch from the Internet in minutes. They often mistrust the idea of mass participation. The same holds true for religion. In dealing with supernatural or spiritual phenomena, rabbis and priests and medicine men who can draw on pre-existing faith traditions can provide comfort that newer, changeable religions cannot. The so-and-so peoples have been doing this for thousands of years? Some open-source believers want to found entirely new religions, and some merely want to reinvigorate a mainstream faith. All religions evolve, of course, but the tinkering inherent to open-source religions can benefit founders and followers alike, Webster says. Rushkoff first approached open-source Judaism more from the techie side than the religious side. He was both inspired by the possibilities of widespread, democratic, participatory media like the Internet, but also fearful that the Internet could be used to manipulate people or invade their privacy on an unprecedented scale. He was most excited about flexible templates that people could alter as they needed, and this led directly to open-source Haggadah. Rushkoff set up a website for Jews to upload pictures, prayers, and descriptions of their Seder meals, encouraging people to adapt the practices however they wanted. Among the areas of Judaism appropriate for open-source revisions, Rushkoff cited Torah commentary as the most obvious example. He also cited interfaith studies, including the study of how Judaism originated in relation to other religions. One area of Judaism not amenable to open-source change, he discovered, was ritual practices. People are much less likely to engage in ritual in a do-it-yourself fashion. He gave the example of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, an invocation that links the four cardinal directions and the archangels Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel, and which has existed for centuries. Limitations aside, followers say that Judaism and paganism are among the religions most amenable to open-source practices. In Judaism, that springs from both the participatory nature of Talmud commentary and the early history of the religion, says Rushkoff. Douglas Cowen, in his book *Cyberhenge*, goes even further, making an explicit analogy to computer coding: Other people who practice open-source religion have much different intentionsâ€”some aim to found entirely new religions, others simply to tweak a mainstream religion and make it more relevant for the modern world. If [Christianity] has a future at all it will require quite a radical rethinking of what this faith narrative means, going to back to the biblical story and asking how we can re-appropriate it. In the modern jurisprudence system, process is everything: In other words, the process gets privilege over the end result and verdict of the trial. Perriman, who has a Ph. Get people involved, even if not much changes about their faith in the end. Those interested in founding new religions, which lack a coherent, pre-established body of beliefs and practices, take a different view. Daniel Kriegman, founder of a new religion called Yoism, stresses that content and process have to work together in a fledgling movement because many things will likely change at the beginning. Content has to be something we convincingly believe. And after years of inquiry, he has some rather strong views about the dangers of

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traditional religions. Kriegman claims he was the first person to found an open-source religion. Though jazzed about the prospects of founding a new religion to combat old religions, Kriegman hesitated: Every once in a while a psychologist goes off the deep end, and I was afraid my colleagues might think that was me. It was also a character a giant in a bedtime fairy tale he used to tell them. His group eschews talk of visions, for instance, since however real the vision may be to the visionary, no one else in the group can experience it. People liked the religion but hated the name. For an open-source religion, this was a sure test of its viability. In a religion more imbued with priestly authority, the flock can be overruled if the high priest dislikes the change. A few African cultures use the word in their creation myths as well, Kriegman says. In fact the name grew to have so many associations that Kriegman joked that perhaps god wanted it that way: The question about the future of open-source religion is the same question that haunts any new religious movement—will it last? But the aversion of open-source religions to doctrine and dogmas makes it seem likely they will have trouble attracting followers who need that core, that bedrock. Would Christianity really be Christianity if people could vote that Christ was not divine? Would Hinduism remain Hinduism if people could throw out reincarnation? If the beliefs are so arbitrary that majority votes can change them, why believe at all? This includes his sometime battle to restore the Wikipedia page about his group, a page someone deleted as too marginal a topic. Wikipedia is an important tool for a religion founded on the principles of the free and open Internet, and Kriegman fought the deletion with Wikipedia administrators. He seems to lack the fanaticism that, for better or worse, does mark successful new religions. With open-source Judaism, its founder, Rushkoff has more or less dropped out of the movement, though he still believes in it and promotes it when he can. If nothing else, their commitment to openness and the possibility of constant revision is itself a dogma. Rushkoff explains that religions with priests and elite castes are often committed to maintaining a status quo. But on the other hand, if change is necessary, the small number of people in charge make it easier to change the religion all at once, *via fiat*. So, if you have any thoughts, suggestions, or comments regarding this page—or any other aspect of Yoism—please send us a message via email. After registering as a user, you can click the "add new comment" button above to leave a specific comment on this or any page that you want other visitors to be able to read. For comments that are not about a specific page, please use the email option.

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## Chapter 5 : Brain Food by R. R. Reno | Articles | First Things

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Was Christianity the Cause of Modern Science? This is a list of all known places where the claim is made that Christianity was in some sense the cause of modern science. Please e-mail me if you know of any. Needless to say, there are problems with every one of these claims, and I am presently researching them. In short, although the "war between science and Christianity" has been overexaggerated at times, there is a tendency now to actually go too far in the opposite direction, downplaying Christian opposition, or even claiming Christianity as a necessary cause. I will within the year compose an essay on this subject, and am now at the research phase. But just to whet the appetite: The role of Protestantism in science was not a cause, but a consequence of the Scientific Revolution. Aristotelianism was never the dominant scientific schema in antiquity, nor was it ever meant to be a static, unchanging authority--these were the result of Christians giving Aristotle far more weight than he had ever had before. The role of pagan magic and alchemy in inspiring scientific thinking is ignored by Christian historians. The causes of the Revolution trace back to the 13th century Renaissance and the rediscovery of pagan art, philosophy, and science. Optimistic humanism is an outgrowth of ancient Greek and Roman humanism. Fate had nothing to do with scientific thinking in antiquity--indeed, all scientists then were either physical-causal determinists as many are today or they outright denied the existence of Fate as the Epicureans, Sceptics and Medical Empiricists did. Archimedes developed mechanical laws through experimentation. Ptolemy and Galen were engaging in organized experiments and in the former case law-like mathematization in optics, harmonics, and astronomy, just before the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. These and other points will be defended in my upcoming essay. But anyone who wants to challenge me in advance, or defend the Christianity-as-cause thesis in any form, is welcome to write to me. I cannot promise to give detailed replies to every such letter--you may still have to wait for my essay. Nevertheless, the claim that Christianity was responsible for modern science has been made so far in: Wall Street Journal, Oct 15, The physicist Stanley Jaki has pointed out that science was "still-born" in every culture--Greek, Hindu, Chinese--except the Christian West. It was the insistence of thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas on the rationality of God and his creation that paved the way for Newton and Einstein. Yet such a claim has often been made. Taylor, *Does God Exist?* Richardson, *Science and Existence*, pp. Charles Raven, *Science, Religion, and the Future*, pp. But I wonder how many people have actually taken the time to look into those histories in detail? Science and Christianity - Judaism and Islam too - have an intimate tie. Without faith in a Creator God, one who looks at His universe and declares it Good, how can you justify the belief that this universe is worth studying? Indeed, that the universe even makes enough sense to be able to be studied? Ravi Zacharias *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* That assumption misunderstands their nature. It is not accidental that it has generally been in the milieu of Christian belief that investigation in science and thought have flourished. A love for God prompts a love for knowing the world that He has created. The quest for knowledge and truth, therefore, is not hindered, but guided by the very purposes of God. But the tiny book of Philemon shows that the faith had a profound impact on slavery long before abolition. Christ can revolutionize any social relationship. Onesimus, a runaway, decided to turn himself in. In Philemon, Paul asks for a second miracle. He pleads with the owner to "welcome him as you would welcome me" verse Such an attitude, in that culture, was social dynamite. Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, pp. Many historians, of many different religious persuasions including atheistic, have shown that modern science started to flourish only in largely Christian Europe. Stanley Jaki has documented how the scientific method was stillborn in all cultures apart from the Judeo-Christian culture of Europe. These historians point out that the basis of modern science depends on the assumption that the universe was made by a rational creator. An orderly universe makes perfect sense only if it were made by an orderly Creator. But if there is no creator, or if Zeus and his

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gang were in charge, why should there be any order at all? So, not only is a strong Christian belief not an obstacle to science, such a belief was its very foundation. It is, therefore, fallacious to claim, as many evolutionists do, that believing in miracles means that laboratory science would be impossible. It should thus not be surprising, although it is for many people, that most branches of modern science were founded by believers in creation. The list of creationist scientists is impressive. Newton, Faraday, Maxwell, Kelvin; Chemistry: Boyle, Dalton, Ramsay; Biology: Kalthoff, "God and Creation: Perspectives on Science and Theology" David Darling, Equations of Eternity, Speculations on Consciousness, meaning, and the mathematical rules that orchestrate the Cosmos, p. Indeed, much of the ancient natural philosophy became, if not absorbed, then at least condoned and approved, by orthodox religions in the West. In the end, however, it was the Judaic, Christian, and Moslem traditions, which despite being so dogmatic actually helped nurture the open-minded scientific approach. The belief in a rational deity, who consciously designed the cosmos, encouraged the idea that there must be a coherency and a natural order to things--from which it followed that by observing the world it ought to be possible to elucidate this order. That prospect was the driving force behind the Renaissance intellect and its personification in men like Kepler, Galileo, and Newton. The question concerns why the ancient Greeks failed to build on the fantastic legacy of Athens and so reach technological take off. And why did the Christian civilization of Western Europe manage it? To understand we have to look at the way the Greeks thought. At root they saw the universe as big and alien. The most powerful force was Fortune. Even the gods were subject to Her whims. She was fickle and dangerous and to upset Her was foolish indeed. We would call it tempting fate. If this is the way you think, the experimental method is simply not going to appeal. The idea that the universe ran according to strict mathematical rules was just laughable. To even suggest it would attract the beady eye of Fortune. Mathematics itself was something mystical and beyond comprehension. Hence the Greeks failed to describe the world. Oriental cultures were also dominated by this idea of inescapable fate. Science once again seemed a pointless and dangerous activity. Enter the Christians, who after a thousand years of barbarian invasions finally managed to achieve some sort of stable if rather dynamic civilization in Europe. He had given his Law and he kept to it. He was constant and reliable. He could be trusted not to change his mind. It followed that His universe would be the same. It was now worthwhile to find out what the laws it ran by were. Thomas Aquinas, in his mammoth Summae, explained how the world around us reflected the perfection of God. Roger Bacon gave us the experimental method. The scene was set. Whether the individual scientist was actually a Christian and they all were was irrelevant. The whole Christian worldview was what counted. If you were brought up in it, it defined the way you thought. It helped in early days to fix the calendar, and it caused Egyptian priests to chronicle eclipses with such care that in time they became able to predict them. These two services I am prepared to acknowledge, but I do not know of any others. From Eternal Cycles to an Oscillating Universe Thaxton, The Soul of Science: Noble, The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention Noebel, Understanding the Times: Hooykaas, Religion and the Rise of Modern Science, Possible References--anyone who can get me exact refs or quotes, please do! Buckley, either in Possible sighting:

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## Chapter 6 : Science & Christianity: Are They Compatible? | Stand to Reason

*Numerous early great scientists were theists (many were Christians) to which modern science owes debt, these include Newton, Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Boyle, Pasteur and Mendel. These forefathers of science correctly perceived no contradiction between science and theism, as did Sir Francis Bacon.*

Human Nature, Religious and Philosophical Aspects The suggestion that there is such a thing as human nature implies a specific stance with relation to what a human being is. Do humans have something like a nature? If so, in what does human nature consist? These questions can not be answered from a sole description of specific characteristics, which is one of the main reasons there is a continuous debate over this issue. To say something about what a human being essentially or in nature is, implies saying something about what humans ought to be. Consequently, there is always a kind of normative self-reference in the way the question "What is human nature? It is not simply a question of how humans are to understand this or that case, but an articulation of how humans understand, or ought to understand, themselves. Theories about human nature state something about the place of humans in nature. They also try to define what specifically makes a human being different from other living things. However, as made clear by theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, one has to distinguish between the human being as part of nature, and the nature of the human being. These two issues do not necessarily coincide. The former implies a descriptive approach and investigates different empirical and phenomenological aspects that help people better understand their place in nature. Its importance is thus also related to interpretation of the place of human beings in history and culture. Taken separately, these approaches offer a basis for the interpretation of human nature from a more naturalistic or humanistic view. Consequently, the sciences usually offer more material relevant to the understanding of the place of humans in nature than for answering questions about human destiny. A theory about human nature that also takes into consideration an understanding of the human place in nature usually has to account for some or all of the following issues: What specifically makes the human being as a species different from other species? What does it mean to be a person? Do human beings have free will? How does one understand morality, religion, and culture? How are these elements related to language and to human self-consciousness subjectivity? Is religion necessarily connected to humanity? Are humans able to act on reasons and principles that cannot be reduced to causes? What is one to think of death? What is the basis for human dignity? Some of these questions can be seen as attempts to differentiate between issues that, in the past, were discussed with reference to the difference between body and soul. Human nature in non-Western world religions The variety of ways to understand human nature is expressed also in different world religions. In Hinduism and Buddhism human nature is partly understood from the perspective of the self as part of all that is, and given the task of becoming the non-self. Like other pantheistic religions, both Hinduism and Buddhism affirm that human beings are related to all that is and, simultaneously, how the self is essentially divine. Beyond the empirical human is the human essence, atman, which is identical with the ultimate reality, Brahman. To overcome individuality and to become part of the encompassing world is the aim of human life. This can be done by transcending the world of the senses. This aim is realized when the self dissolves into the whole after death, but also can be anticipated in different forms of meditational practices. Whereas Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize how human nature is related to divine nature, the self is generally thought of as distinct from the divine in Semitic religions such as Islam and Judaism. As in Judaism, God is the creator of humans. The aim of humanity is to realize this dependence and live accordingly<sup>1</sup>. This is different from the most dominant traditions in Christianity. An original aspect of Islam is that all humans are understood as to be born Muslim. It is the cultural environment that changes their essentially Muslim nature in to something else The Bible offers no developed theory about human nature. Hence, human beings are understood in terms of their relation with God; it is this relation that is thought to make humans unique compared to other species. In Psalm 8, humans are placed between the angels and God, indicating their high rank in the order of creation.

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Humans are accordingly responsible to God. Simultaneously, they are themselves part of nature; they are made of earth, and without the life-giving breath of God they return to dust. The Bible depicts human life as dependent on the continuous creative activity of God. Humans are not understood in terms of the Greek dichotomy between soul and body, but human life is viewed from different perspectives, such as flesh, body, heart—all notions that can also take on different spiritual meanings. There is a positive affirmation of human embodiment in the Hebrew Bible, echoed in the New Testament teachings on the resurrection of the body and the human need for bodily health, as well as spiritual salvation. One could suggest that human nature from a Judeo-Christian point of view is to be an embodied image of God. This position is affirmed in Christianity, where Jesus Christ is seen as the true human being, and thus reveals what humans are meant to be. When entering into dialogue with Greek modes of thought, Christian theologians had to articulate the relationship of humans with God from points of view offered by existing philosophical knowledge. This challenged theology to develop an understanding of what it meant to be created in the image of God. The dominating point of view through the Middle Ages became that human nature is unique in rational faculties, understanding, consciousness, and spirit. This view, as expressed by Augustine of Hippo, draws on Platonism, which emphasized rationality and the eternity of the human soul. It also included the view developed by Aristotle in ancient Greece and by Thomas Aquinas during the Middle Ages that put humans on the same level as the rest of nature, but with rationality as the species-unique skill. The eighth-century theologian Johannes Damascenus expresses the prevalent understanding of human nature in the Middle Ages: The human being is the image of God because it has reason and free will and is able to be its own master. Philosophical patterns for a theory of human nature

Two main philosophical trends have had a major influence on understandings of human nature. From the ancient Greek philosopher Plato onwards, the human being alone is able to understand and grasp rationally the world as it is in itself, beyond every change. This ability derives from the rational faculties, expressed in the ability to think. Thus, human nature is closely linked to the ability to think, and to act with thinking as a guide. Plato articulated the paradigm for a rationalist understanding of human nature. He assumed a dichotomy between body and soul. The soul is the site of reason, and as such it is understood as eternal and partly and potentially independent of the body. The body, on the other hand, is mortal and will die. As a consequence, Plato sees the flourishing of human nature in its ability to control life with rational means. Descartes claims that while the external world *res extensa* operates by mechanistic principles, this is not the case with humans, who are guided by reason. Animals are without reason and hence to be understood according to mechanistic causation only. This view separates the human being sharply from the rest of nature, and suggests that what is specifically human cannot be investigated by the same principles that were utilized by the emerging modern natural sciences. Philosophically, theories of human nature before the Enlightenment are either rationalist or empiricist in outlook. The empiricist outlook puts more stress on human experience as a condition that shapes actual fulfillment in human life. This approach also put more emphasis on the continuity of humans with the rest of nature, and, combined with the experimental approach to investigation of nature, it contributed greatly to the development of modern science. As a result, human nature is here regarded as part of nature, and not something unique. This view is consonant with a religious position that sees the human soul as a function of a complex physical organism rather than as an independent substance. Challenges from evolutionary thinking

A process similar to the one that began when Christian theology met Greek philosophy developed with the rise of biological insights during the nineteenth century. Theology had to articulate views on human nature that were able to respond to, oppose, and integrate the insights offered by the research of Charles Darwin and others. Obsolete theological theories about the constancy of human nature were now challenged; humans could no longer be seen as a species directly created by God outside of the evolutionary process. Some theological traditions, however, were reluctant to enter into a positive reception of what biology could mean for understanding humanity as part of natural history. Some continue to believe that the biblical stories tell the actual prehistory of humans. This view cannot, however, be held without ignoring the massive amounts of data resulting from scientific inquiry into the prehistory of humans and nature.

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Following the rapid development during the nineteenth century of more biologically informed views on human nature, the first half of the twentieth century gave rise to other ways of thinking about human nature. In Germany a special discipline developed called philosophical anthropology. Still trying to appropriate the insights of biology, representatives of this movement attempted to show how humans must be seen as a species that participates in a spiritual realm and is able to relate to the world in a way not available to other living creatures. Some theologians, notably Pannenberg, tried to direct this trend toward integration or mediation between scientific and humanistic insights. Here, physiological traits of humanity are seen as conditions for a religious attitude. The ability of human beings to transcend themselves is interpreted as the basic trait that can relate us to and realize our divine destiny. On the other hand, the estrangement from this destiny is. The content of human life, human identity, and human will are developed in tension between selfishness and divinity. Integrating scientific knowledge with theological anthropology Attempts to explain moral behavior and also religion in the light of biological evolution have stirred much discussion in which human action is judged by moral standards that reflect the extent to which actions contribute to evolutionary advancement or progress. Critics claim that proponents of this position "fail to demonstrate why the promotion of biological evolution by itself should be the standard to measure what is morally good" Ayala, p. The interaction between science and theology has generally consisted of two tasks: The second task has led to more modest positions on what theology can say about the place of humans in nature, and there has been no unconstrained reception of the evolutionary approach to morality or religion in theological anthropology. Generally, theological anthropology that is in dialogue with the sciences tends to navigate between biological reductionism and cultural constructivism. Here, the sciences are seen as elucidating the conditions for a religious or moral position, rather than actually explaining them solely on the basis of biology. The debate over morality in relation to human nature also exhibits a basic challenge concerning the relation between science and theology: Should theology offer interpretations of insights from science, or should theology try to balance, correct, or contradict these in relation to its own definition of humanity? An example of this problem can be found in the discussion of altruism. Some scientists consider acts of altruism to be contrary to the mechanisms promoting human evolution, while others see altruism as a positive device for evolution. Theological anthropology seems bound to contradict the first view, while it can relate affirmatively to the second, claiming that evolution operates on other, not naturally given, principles in humanity. Here, culture is seen as a process that is reducible to natural selection. Religion takes part in this.

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## Chapter 7 : Science+Religion+Culture: Search Magazine On Yoism | Yoism

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Paul Griffiths, with his new book *Intellectual Appetite*, has set out to discipline and deepen that fundamental human longing for knowledge. The key, he thinks, is for us to overcome the distorting influence of the concept of ownership, an approach to the intellectual life that encourages us to desire knowledge as a possession. While it is richly rewarding and full of fresh insights, it is hard to say that this loose-limbed but sharply argued book succeeds at fully explaining intellectual appetite. As Griffiths works his way through perversions and misdirections of desire, he falls a little too far under the spell of his metaphor of ownership: He overemphasizes the prideful impulse that tries to turn knowledge into something we control. And sometimes we turn knowledge into neither a possession nor an idol but instead trivialize our intellectual appetite, gravitating toward pleasing distractions, gossipy tidbits, and mental bric-a-brac that grab our attention but remain existentially inconsequential. Griffiths begins his analysis with the traditional distinction between *curiositas*, the ancient and medieval term used to identify a vicious intellectual appetite, and *studiositas*, which designates the most general form of intellectual virtue. Curiosity and studiousness are the obvious English translations, but it tells us something about how differently we now view the life of the mind that contemporary culture tends to reverse the connotation. As Griffiths notes, folk wisdom retains a memory of the older tradition: By contrast, the word studiousness conjures up negative images of thick-glassed students slavishly memorizing the periodic table or Latin declensions. The obvious strategy would be to work against this modern reversal of moral censure by returning to premodern sources. But Griffiths sets aside this approach. He recognizes that readers are often seduced away from the hard work of conceptual analysis by the pleasures of the now so common what-went-wrong narratives of modernity, to say nothing of the savory prospect of ingesting tasty philological and historical facts. Instead, Griffiths uses *Intellectual Appetite* to outline the basic dynamics of the intellectual life: The possibilities of distortion, perversion, and diminishment of the intellectual life are as varied as the human tendency toward sin. Although our virtues and vices influence each other, people can be curious and nonetheless use their compromised knowledge justly, as studious people can suffer for a degree of sloth and greed. These combinations are possible because the vice of curiosity and the virtue of studiousness concern the way we desire knowledge, not what we do with the knowledge we have. This is a subtle but significant point, one central to *Intellectual Appetite*. Our intellectual lives are influenced by what we want truth to be, but we are also influenced by what we want knowledge to be like. The prideful soul wants truth to be self-complimenting, the greedy soul wants it to be profitable, the slothful soul wants it to be anodyne, and so on. The crucial step, however, comes next: To satisfy these perverted desires, we train ourselves to acquire knowledge in convenient packages that we can easily manipulate. We take a piece of truth captive and detach it from other truths. The gain for a soul corrupted by other vices is clear: Atomized pieces of knowledge are more readily manipulated, controlled, and used. Facts, theories, ideas, and all the other elements of the intellectual life become delicious morsels carefully trimmed off from truth as a whole. This mental habit of trimming is the fundamental form of curiosity: With this account of curiosity, Griffiths can explain how intellectual virtue turns our desire for knowledge in the opposite way. To know something about the genetic mutation of frogs, or the Battle of Waterloo, or the principles of logic certainly provides a specific competence. But these items of knowledge and areas of expertise also open toward something more: They also tend toward reflection on what it means to be a knower and even toward contemplation of the source of existence itself. Thus, Griffiths envisions studiousness, the virtue most relevant to the intellectual life, as the human desire to know catechized toward embrace rather than enclosure, toward wonder rather than possession. The world is not made up of tiny little bits of disconnected reality, all just waiting for our mental appropriation. Nothing merely exists, because everything comes into

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being and endures in the shimmering light of the divine gift of existence. Griffiths insists that, with this grammar, he is not blurring the distinctions between particular entities. The discrete reality of my existence is not absorbed into a generic ocean of humanity, and God does not become the world or the world become God. In this and other ways, a great deal of what modern intellectual life prizes as virtue turns out to be vice. Our educational culture has long been romanced by the ideal of an exhaustive and indubitable account of reality, which Griffiths designates the *mathesis universalis*, the universal metric or method for attaining knowledge. Although quite different in details, both hope to identify a universal, rigorous method for acquiring reliable knowledge, and both ask us to boil down our basic beliefs to bare facts or clearly distinct ideas that can be scrupulously examined and verified. Just such an approach trains intellectual desire in the direction of enclosure by sequestration: Fence off nuggets of certainty from the polluting world of inherited prejudice and unreliable assumptions. Few philosophers endorse the fantasy of a *mathesis universalis* anymore; a genial skepticism and broad pluralism predominate these days. Nonetheless, Griffiths is correct to suggest that a great deal of intellectual training continues to encourage the habits of mind dear to Descartes and Locke. He points out, for instance, that most academic disciplines put a premium on methodology, which focuses the desire for knowledge on a limited set of formal properties. Similarly, many disciplines tend toward taxonomies, thereby forcing phenomena into a limited range of defined categories so that the subject matter can be managed more effectively. In both cases, we train our minds to sift, limit, and atomize. Far more influential in academic culture are such things as standards for admission, criteria for hiring and tenuring, the allocation of grants, and the rhetoric of excellence, although Griffiths leaves these unanalyzed. One wonders, for example, whether the maligned Old Boy system of academic patronage may not have had its strong points. After all, intellectual virtue inheres in persons, not in the lists of publications that promise more objective standards of merit. For that matter, the preoccupation with property and ownership leads Griffiths to make overly quick connections between the vice of curiosity and the intellectual techniques of modern science. Yes, Francis Bacon, that early seventeenth-century advocate of the scientific method, emphasized the power and control that knowledge provides. He consistently pictured the scientist as a well-armed investigator who conquers nature and takes possession of her mysteries. When scientists toggle back and forth between theoretical formulations and experimental data, they are treating what they know as translucent rather than definitive, participatory rather than sequestered. Newton developed calculus to give formal expression to his theory of gravity. In many disciplines, graphs and tables of data bring out correlations. A well-drawn graph can illuminate possible links between economic growth and birthrates, between immigration patterns and religious affiliation, between soil acidity and corn production. In each of these instances, the intellectual practice of *mathesis* that Griffiths associates with curiosity actually presumes and reveals the participatory character of reality. Indeed, the approach Griffiths takes throughout *Intellectual Appetite* has its own formal qualities: Not surprisingly, this formalism encourages the same fruitful results one encounters in other uses of the techniques of *mathesis*. This is not to say that the tendency toward curiosity in modern academic culture may not find encouragement in the methods of modern science as well as in the methods of phenomenology and the formalism of theological grammars. The sheer intellectual fruitfulness of the experimental method can so mesmerize the mind with its power that we can become blindly dismissive of other ways of acquiring knowledge. But the same holds true for poetry and other approaches to knowing. In my experience, compulsively objective scientists are evenly matched, or even outmatched, by shamelessly subjective humanists. Here we begin to see more clearly the consequences of overly emphasizing the notion of ownership. Think of the political scientists tempted by conspiracy theories, the theologians in the thrall of elaborate apocalyptic calculations, and the literature professors swept into the latest fashions of cultural studies. The dynamics of ownership may explain some of this. Like Gnostics, preening with pride that they possess the secret key to all knowledge, we can be tempted to fix our minds on one theory or insight. Griffiths himself introduces a fashionable concept of great relevance, the notion of spectacle. Other, less dramatic examples come to mind: In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine provides a particularly vivid account of the power

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of spectacles. He reports that his close friend Alypius, though possessing a good and cultured character, became addicted to the bloody, violent games that provided civic entertainment in the ancient world. One day, some friends persuaded him to go. Alypius steeled himself, closing his eyes to avoid participating in the barbarism. On the contrary, all the images Augustine uses point in the opposite direction: The spectacle owns Alypius. Yes, but we also yearn to be dominated and controlled. The spectacle releases us from the participatory structure of reality, and this existential freedom brings feelings of relief. We should not underestimate the pervasive role of a similar dynamic in the intellectual life. Who does not know a quite intelligent person who has given himself to an arresting thesis or compelling theory? The appeal is not hard to understand. Who would not want to serve an idea or theory or principle that promises to deliver us from the arduous and endless work of discerning how to live faithfully and responsibly? In the twentieth century, not a few American communists and fellow travelers believed in Marxism because they wanted a fail-safe way to serve the interests of the poor. The problem is not that the ardent nature of the conviction corrupts, as if believing anything with fervor and intensity counts as intellectual vice. As Griffiths makes so clear, intellectual vice concerns how we seek knowledge. The vice is found in the shape our desires give to truth. They take on the role of the spectacle: The manipulative and acquisitive dimension that Griffiths identifies certainly has a role to play, even among the gullible. Truth turned into a spectacle removes us from our temporal destiny of participatory knowing, which is but the intellectual dimension of our vocation of love. In my experience, the most ardent empiricists and narrow-minded scientists have exactly the opposite mentality that Griffiths ascribes to them. Yes, their intellectual appetites are hopelessly bewitched by the intrinsically sequestering methods of modern science, a bewitchment that virtuous scientists avoid. But they want to be owned by their little tidbits of knowledge, not the other way around. They are eager to submit themselves to the Empire of Facts. At root, the vice of curiosity is always to be found in the nonparticipatory dynamic of enclosure by sequestration, of which ownership and idolatrous worship are but modes, and not even the most common ones at that. This evasion does not feed a desire for possession, and it certainly does not encourage us to fall down before what we study with an attitude of submissive worship. Instead, the sequestration by politically correct categorization creates an atmosphere of existential freedom. With such categories race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Aristotle or Augustine or Thomas Aquinas are not speaking about a human condition we share; they are mouthpieces for their class or unconscious representatives of their gender, figures to be critiqued, not heard. Plutarch was among the first ancient figures to isolate and discuss curiosity, and he sheds light on our postmodern impulse toward atomizing culture into politically correct categories so that our intellectual vocations are no longer vulnerable to knowledge tensed with moral and spiritual consequence.

### Chapter 8 : W. Jim Neidhardt (Author of The Knight's Move)

*Because the Christian founders of modern science believed the heavens genuinely declare the glory of God (Psalm 1), they possessed both the necessary conceptual framework and the spiritual incentive to boldly explore nature's mysteries.*

### Chapter 9 : Science in Christian Perspective

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