

EDITORIAL

Can We Formulate a Religion Based on Science and Vice-versa?

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Science is objectivity and evidence-based knowledge about nature, whereas religion is faith and belief based on experience and feelings. Science is necessary for modern living, our wellbeing and survival; religion is necessary for overcoming the mental stress due to fears of unknown and ethical values for our collective co-existence. While both are products of social collaborations and understanding, humans have dichotomous beliefs in religions vis-à-vis science. We explore if science and religion can be unified despite these dichotomies. We also propose formulation of a religion based on science and vice-versa. The basis of creation and existence in science is understood to be based on fundamental forces of nature, like gravity, electromagnetic, nuclear and the rest of those. Some of these forces are well understood but others are not yet fully understood or even might be unknown or unknowable. As we evolve evidence-based knowledge about nature some of the unknowns of the domain of religion become known and occupy the domain of science. This migration of unknowns of religions to knowns of science is perennial and irreversible. Therefore, we find that epistemologically religion and science are complimentary to each other and hence should be mutually adaptive even in modern times. Further, we propose a science-based model of religion and vice versa to bring a consonance between the two to reshape these entities, which could be the best of both worlds. While science should work on the areas of religions and accept its own limitations, the religions should adopt the logical findings of science to benefit the humankind comprehensively. The possible routes to this model and its different nuances are presented and discussed herewith. If religion can adopt these fundamental truths of nature and science, while accepting its limitations, can provide solace to humanity due to unknowns of nature, a harmoniousness between the two can emerge.

Nature produces, sustains, and destroys human beings. From the beginning to the end, life is the game of nature. It is therefore important to understand nature as the central point of human life and its myriad of associated ramifications. These ramifications can be put in the form of questions like, how and why did life and finally human beings come into existence? What is the purpose of life? How did human transform from the earlier primitive form to the modern scientific and technological life form? Is life in its current form sustainable or do we need to change our ways for a better world of our shared future? Today these questions intrigue everyone and it is expected that science should find their answers, because primarily it is the science and its philosophy, which has reached an adequate level of understanding and unlocking the mysteries of nature. However, these questions can be answered in a limited way because only some of the pertinent aspects are known, some are partially known and others are not yet known at all. Indeed, this is the real strength of science that it openly admits that what we know is finite and therefore unknowns might be infinite.

Ever since the dawn of humankind, the developed form of human brain and the associated mind played a crucial role in fulfilment of the most basic instincts of survival through food, shelter for protection and reproduction etc. It is plausible that the primitive man in the wild had to struggle for these basic needs in a fragmented manner and there was no need for advanced social ventures such as economics, finance, politics, religion, and science. As the human population and their experiences grew, social existence came into being, these higher needs became imperative and through its developed mind humanity advanced these systems of social interactions. When fears of unknowns like diseases, natural calamities and death became stressful, and ethics in social, financial, and political dealings became necessity for sustainability, the foundation of religion could have been laid. Later religions became organized sectors through human experiences and subjugation over ages and some of the religions became dominant and authoritative social setups to which populations subscribed and even surrendered. Over the course of time, certain religions and empires were unified to become so authoritative and

powerful that disobeying their dogmas and diktats were punishable offense, even to the extent of death sentence. Sometime during such dark ages of social-evolution, certain courageous and truth-seeking individuals established and advocated the facts of nature, which came to be known as science.

Although science in its modern form originated much after the religions, at least a few thousand years, it quickly became a force to be reckoned with. However, there was a stark contrast between the two. Science was perceived anti-religion. This was because some of the religious dogmas and rituals were not founded on evidence-based truths of nature, rather those were based on orthodoxy and unwarranted beliefs. Also, science did not encompass the areas of human psychology or emotions such as love, compassion, violence, ethics, forgiveness etc., which are important attributes for human peace and co-existence. Because these areas of psychology were very well perceived and adopted by humanity in religions, those were embraced as great principles of life. As a result, there existed a deep-rooted and unshakable submission by the followers to those religions even when the foundation of modern science was already laid. Subsequently science progressed rapidly, dramatically & decisively and it led to industrial, medical, and agricultural revolutions starting from the middle of 18th century. This proved to be the real saviour of mankind for food, clothing, shelter, and medical care to not only provide the basic necessities for survival but also the scientific treatments for diseases, enhanced life expectancy and the quality of life. Since science offered all these and an evidence-based understanding of nature, people started believing in science objectively and religion became a parallel system for all those domains where science could not provide any credible path. However, still the religion and science could not be put in the same basket. While science gave birth to technologies for life like modern transport, residential and commercial buildings, food, communications, clothing etc. and created humongous job opportunities, it has not yet answered the questions such as origin of life, understanding of death, ethics, and even routine subjects like the origin of psychological disorders and de-filements, and the traumas generated due to those. On the other hand, religions proved to be offering some solutions to such problems, primarily psychological, though mostly subjective, or even baseless sometimes, which humans accepted. As a result, religions are still important for the humanity despite a colossal success of science. Of course, there are a significant number of people who are atheists or non-believers, but this does not undermine the realms of religions significantly.

Creation, existence, and annihilation are the three most fundamental processes of nature, which concern humanity at every level. Therefore, these subjects are common to both science and religion. In science, despite the colossal efforts to understand these fundamental processes of nature, it is still not fully understood that how energy and matter are created in the first place. As we understand in a limited way, it is the fundamental forces such as gravitational, electromagnetic, nuclear and the rest of these, which are responsible for the existence of matter in its current state and its destruction at microscopic and macroscopic scales. But we are also aware of the fact that science has not yet elicited and understood all kinds of fundamental forces of nature. As mysterious as it is, the ex-nihilo creation of matter and energy is an area about which we are scientifically clueless. Are there some forces in nature, which have the capability to create energy and matter ex-nihilo and what is the nature of such forces? This we do not know and is the point that bothers scientists even today.

Creation, existence, and end of life is even more mysterious and complex because of one additional parameter i.e., consciousness. How non-living elements become living organizations is a subject of infinite mystery. Is there a force in nature that creates consciousness in the aggregated elements of cosmos? What are the prerequisites and conditions under which non-living elements become part of a living entity? These questions are baffling even to the most brilliant scientific minds of today as had been bothering in the entire history of science. One reason for this is that the living beings are so intricate and yet so perfect in design and functioning, that it is impossible to believe that nature could create such living organisms in primitive and advanced forms through any random or accidental process. Although theory of evolution through natural selection is the best explanation so far since last 200 years, but it is also marred by the most basic questions of physics and chemistry to answer the origin of life on earth. Logically and plausibly, one may suggest that there might be some highly intelligent or advanced force in nature, which designed and created the myriad forms of sentients, the most intricate of those being humans. But what is that force? Is it the same force which in the field of religion people call as 'God'? The scientists think that we do not yet know any such force nor we are closer to finding such a force at the moment. It may be mentioned that the myriad of life forms that we have talked about here are the ones that we observe on our planet earth, while we do not exclude the possibilities of existence of other forms of life somewhere there in the vast universe filled with trillions of gigantic galaxies, each in turn again filled with trillions of stars and their planetary systems.

Scientifically we have yet to find the forces of nature or its alternatives, responsible for creation of energy, matter, and life. Although we have not yet succeeded and putatively the efforts are going on in identifying such forces of nature or its alternatives, it does not mean that we should be living with the stress of this yet unknown. So how do we get peace, love, and joy of living within the myriad of such unknown forces? A further extension of these unknowns encompasses the uncertainties of life and death, which creates a psychological fear and restlessness in the mind. Lower animals of nature simply follow their basic instincts to manage such fears of life and death. Of course, advanced brain and mind of human beings are assets for dealing with such problems, for example, through medication or surgical procedures to cure diseases and enhance life expectancy. However, the same developed mind can also become a source of enhanced fears and other defilements such as depression, violence, corruptions etc. Such stresses can sometimes be life threatening to oneself or even to others. If there were no fears, greed, corruptions etc. the human mind by nature would be peaceful, loving, and joyous. It is the tenets of religion which are supposed to bring peace and joy of life despite fears, greed, violence, and corruptions. Traditions such as faith in God, love, compassion and forgiveness, meditation for mindfulness, peace and joy, prayers for universal well-being are the human practices, which bring about psychological relaxations despite so much of violence, unjust, unrest and prejudices and biases in the societies and even natural calamities such as diseases, pandemics, earthquakes, hurricanes, flood etc. Religions transform the fears of unknowns such as death due to accidents or natural calamities into submission, obeisance, and love for God. As we know religion and its concept of God is a creation of human mind for achieving the noble purpose of peace and joy of living. As per the tenets of religion if one has submission, obeisance and love for God, God protects them from the agonies and sufferings caused by the unknowns such as uncertainties of natural calamities, diseases, financial losses, vilification etc. Because these tenets of religion are effectively working since ages, religions are there to stay. Religions have an important role to play in human life even though their basic tenets are scientifically unwarranted, unproven or even baseless. Therefore, religions are as important as science for a comprehensive good living.

Religions have one more profound positive effect on the collective co-existence, that is ethics and morality. While science has not yet ventured into evidence-based knowledge on the necessity of ethics and morality, religions preach these great qualities of human beings as necessary components of submission, obeisance, and love for God. As we know that for our peaceful co-existence and shared prosperity, ethics and morality are essential, the importance of religion is self-evident. Some scholars tend to think that morality and ethics can be independent of religion but for common masses this does not seem to be so. They need a strong psychological anchor to hold them to be ethical and moral and religions provide that anchor. As stated above, religions invoke the feelings of submission, obeisance, and love for God, which in turn naturally brings about the feelings of ethics and morality in the individuals.

Having stated the basic tenets, different ramifications and rules of science and religions in human life let us now discuss the possibility of formulation of a religion that is consistent with science and vice versa. Basically, the central component of religion should be that to which human beings can believe, subjugate, and practice with full devotion so that their psychological stresses are mitigated and morality and ethics come to the fore in routine behavior. At the same time such a religion should have a logical veracity of science, which means objectivity, universality even though its complete understanding might be still unknown or partially known. We propose that nature is that entity. Nature is real, true, the creator, the sustainer, and the destroyer. Nature is in everything and everything is in nature. So, in a religion conforming to the tenets of science and vice versa nature should be the supreme power. In the religion of science, we understand nature, we submit ourselves to nature, we love nature and we worship nature. Tautologically, nature with its physical forces can be the God in the religion of science.

Nature worship is not alien to humanity; it has been practiced in many traditions since the beginning of human civilization. However, it could not become an organized universal religion so far perhaps because of lack of understanding of its fundamental tenets or unappealing profoundness of its rituals and modus operandi. Nature worship was more common at the dawn of humanity and its culmination into a social setup, but now it has been practically completely replaced by other organized religions. Religion of science is supposed to be more comprehensive, which includes the studies in sciences, especially the life sciences, and the practices of spirituality such as meditation, oneness of mankind living in communion with nature and practices to preserve and use the resources of nature prudently. Similarly, science based on religion should accept, which it does, that everything is not yet known in science and practices to counter the adverse effects of unknowns may be encompassed in the domain of religion. As those unknowns become knowns through scientific studies those will migrate from the domain of religion to the domain of science. This migration is plausibly ever dynamic and unidirectional.

In the preceding discussion we have shown that epistemologically science and religion are not in conflict with each other, rather they are complementary to each other. Both of these human endeavors are necessary ingredients for the peaceful co-existence of mankind. While science agrees that our ignorance about understanding of the nature is still infinite, the religion should agree that scientific studies can provide the answers to unlock the mysteries of nature. In a science-based religion nature should be the supreme power and we adopt the known practices of spirituality and religions, keeping nature at the central stage. We conclude that nature-centric religion is the religion of science and it could have the capacity to provide the expected peace, harmony, and joy of living collectively for making this planet a better place. Both science and religion are products of social collaborations and deep understanding of nature. A healthy and profound thinking mind is expected to have the generosity and propensity of accepting a religion-based science and science-based religion in accordance with the tenets and laws of nature to bring about peace, harmony, and joy of co-existence.