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The Interplay Between Scientific and Religious Thought

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Abstract
This paper explores the complex and evolving relationship between scientific and religious thought, analyzing how these two domains have shaped, confronted, and complemented each other across different historical periods. From the early days of philosophical inquiry, through the scientific revolution, and into the modern era, science and religion have engaged in both conflict and cooperation. The abstract examines landmark events such as the trial of Galileo, the debates over Darwin's theory of evolution, and contemporary discussions on bioethics and cosmology. It explores the philosophical implications of these encounters, including questions about the nature of truth, the limits of human understanding, and the role of faith and reason in interpreting the world. Special attention is given to periods when science and religion have worked in tandem, such as in the development of natural theology and the ethical considerations within scientific practice. The paper also considers current perspectives, highlighting interdisciplinary efforts that seek constructive dialogue and integration between scientific and spiritual worldviews. Ultimately, the abstract argues that the interaction between science and religion is not a simple story of opposition but a dynamic interplay that continues to shape intellectual, cultural, and ethical landscapes. By fostering respectful engagement and mutual understanding, science and religion can contribute to addressing the complex questions facing society today.

Keywords: Philosophical Inquiry, Relationship, Religion, Science, Thought

1. Introduction
Throughout modern times, scientific thinking has effectively dominated human value orientations. The "scientific mindset" has become particularly prevalent. However, the tragic historical events of the 20th century and especially the beginning of the 21st century have led many thinkers to seriously question the omnipotent power of scientific thinking and its role in solving human and worldly problems. Meanwhile, religion seems to be experiencing a "renaissance," increasingly demonstrating its profound influence on individuals and society. Many even "turn to religion as the last refuge of humanity." This reality raises the issue of the relationship between scientific thinking and religious thinking in a particularly acute way, requiring a satisfactory resolution. Solving this problem requires us to first clarify the concepts of "science" and "religion."

2. An Overview of Science and Religion
Scientific thinking attempts to construct a systematic conception of the world through observation, analysis, and interpretation. It forms theories that allow us to understand the results of observations, predict future events, and their consequences. A key characteristic of scientific thinking is its constant evolution, with new ideas always emerging. Scientific theories are historical in nature, representing the best methods for examining data. They are frequently tested and revised. They may be authoritative and normative for a time, but then discarded, replaced by newer, more complex, or more predictive theories. Scientific thinking is based on observation and reason. It generates an ever-increasing and evolving body of knowledge. Science should not be equated with a single, specific theory. Scientific thinking has two purposes: understanding (reflecting humanity's innate curiosity (Aristotle), forcing people to care about the nature of the world) and power (monitoring reality). Today, our lives are inseparable from knowledge and technology based on science. Technology has become a clear illustration of the effectiveness of science. We know that modern science has transformed many aspects of our lives. This leads to the conclusion that the scientific methods of understanding life, scientific thinking, are correct; otherwise, no technology could exist. In other words, it is thanks to technology that people consider science effective, and scientific thinking to be entirely correct. However, this only assumes that scientific thinking provides people with a sound and practical basis for understanding the world.

Religion is a special kind of human relationship based on a system of values that is "sanctified" ("transcendentalized") and "humanized." Most forms of religion expect their doctrines to encompass knowledge about the nature of the world and the place of humankind within it. They are closely related to philosophical thought at their respective stages (as philosophical thought explores and justifies spiritual value systems). However, not only intellectual clarity (thinking) but also piety and loyalty (emotions) are important in religion. The worldviews presented by religion are not simply temporary hypotheses that will be replaced by new ones in a day or two, but are interpreted as eternal truths.

3. In the Epistemology

Science becomes problematic for believers. By studying events, scientists may discover that existing hypotheses are flawed. If this is a scientific hypothesis, then generally everything will be fine: once the necessary data to support the new hypothesis is established, it will replace the old one. But if it is a religious belief, then theist may very well cling to their previous position, even in the face of numerous counterarguments and even when needing to offer a new interpretation to reconcile the old one with irrefutable data provided by scientific reasoning.

Humans ponder extensively on how to solve life's problems. Gradually, they grasp the most effective methods of thinking to solve them. Human consciousness spends most of its time on questions like, "What is this?"; "What does this give me?"; "How should I handle this?" It is here that the dilemma arises between religious and scientific thinking, because scientific thinking provides effective methods for solving many of life's problems. It doesn't require faith, but simply a willingness to study, reflect, and formulate theories. It achieves results! Considering the two purposes of science (understanding and monitoring), we see that each purpose creates problems for religion. Scientific understanding leads people to question the exact interpretations of many traditional religious doctrines, formed in the pre-scientific era, and to defend hypotheses that science cannot support. The power over reality granted to humans by scientific thinking creates ethical problems for believers. For example, nuclear technologies provide an efficient way to use energy; theoretically, this method is less harmful to the environment than using fuel. However, these technologies also lead to disasters at nuclear power plants, as well as the production and use of nuclear weapons. Another area that gives rise to ethical problems is genetic technology.

One might think there are easy ways to resolve the conflict between scientific and religious thinking, such as the assumptions that: scientific thinking is concerned with facts, religious thinking with values; scientific thinking is objective, religious thinking is subjective in its view of the world; religious subjectivity is a remnant of pre-scientific thinking, its significance diminishing with the accumulation of scientific knowledge about the world; the basis of religious thinking is not rationality, but belief. Therefore, everything that science says about the world is meaningless from a religious perspective. However, the issue is far more complex in practice. The interaction between scientific and religious thinking is a very broad topic, many aspects of which are linked to philosophical problems: (1) changing worldviews in Western culture; (2) the opposition between scientific and religious thinking; (3) the relationship between scientific and religious conceptions of the origin of the universe; (4) the relationship between scientific and religious conceptions of nature, humankind, and humankind's place in the universe. The first two problems form the basis for any debate concerning scientific and religious thinking. The last two problems show the conflict of scientific thinking with important characteristics of religious belief.

4. In the Historical Terms

To understand the debate between religion and science from their respective perspectives, it is necessary to consider the historical context of this debate. Western culture has seen two major turning points in the universal worldview (replacing normative models – the common models of reality around which various theories are developed). Each shift has had a profound impact on the interpretation of religious beliefs. The first turning point in the worldview began in the 16th- 17th centuries, causing the medieval worldview to give way to a worldview based on Newtonian physics. The emergence of modern science is linked to this period. The medieval Christian worldview was based partly on the Bible and partly on a combination of Aristotelian doctrine and Ptolemy's cosmology (2nd century). Aristotle asserted that the source of all our knowledge about the world is experience explained by reason. In this respect, Aristotle's view completely coincides with modern scientific thinking. However, Aristotle also believed that all phenomena have a cause and an ultimate cause (the expected result). Aristotle argued that there is a first, immobile motive that is the ultimate cause of all things. In the medieval worldview, this was linked to Ptolemy's doctrine, according to which the Earth is the center of the universe. The spheres surrounding the Earth and their movements control all events that occur on Earth; God controls the spheres themselves.

Natural philosophy (naturphylophilia - the then-existing form of science) was based on the authority of Aristotle and divine revelation. However, despite this authority being perfected by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century through his commentary on Aristotle and his integration of Aristotle into Christian thought, the tendency to study empirical events gradually developed within science. Based on reason and observation, this approach to natural philosophy flourished with the emergence of Newton's (1643-1727) works. He conceived of the universe as a giant machine, each part of which operates according to immutable laws. These laws could be discovered through observation; the scientist did not need to rely on supernatural authority or revelation. God is the creator, but God's creations could be perceived through observation and rational thought. The replacement of the norm has certain consequences for religion. Reason and scientific observation have questioned the principle of authority. The Church, based on authority, waged a hopeless struggle. Contributing to the development of science, Newton and many other scientists were believers and, of course, would not allow themselves to destroy religion through their work. They viewed God as the author of two books—the Bible and nature—and believed that studying them was useful and that they both bore the mark of God's glory.

So, can we speak of the religious basis of scientific thinking? In our view, Christian thought has four

characteristics that propelled the development of scientific thinking in the 16th and 17th centuries. These are the following beliefs: 1. God created the world in a good way, a world worthy of study; 2. God created the world rationally and orderly; therefore, the world is understandable; 3. Nature itself is not worthy of worship (such worship would be pantheism); therefore, humans have the right to study nature through critical thinking; 4. Humanity is given power over the Earth to make it subservient; therefore, humans can create technologies without feeling that it is a force against God's world. In the past, many great scientists were religious, viewing the understanding of the world as an expression of their religious beliefs. For them, the idea that "the world can be understood through science" is the argument proving that the world is a creation of a rational creator.

As the 20th century approached, two great scientific theories—quantum theory and relativity theory—formed at the beginning of the 20th century, brought about another fundamental change in thinking about the structure of the universe. Newton's old world suddenly became too narrow; it contained physical laws that were only valid within a limited range of conditions. For Newton, space, time, matter, and energy were separate concepts, accepted a priori. They formed the framework for his entire conception of the world. Naturally, within the framework of Newton's observations and experiments, these concepts were perfectly valid. When Einstein's theory of relativity was developed at the beginning of the 20th century, it proved Newton's ideas irrelevant. The discovery of the interaction between concepts Newton considered separate played a major role in changing the perspective: the special theory of relativity (1905) established a relationship between matter and energy such that, according to the famous formula $e = mc^2$, the destruction of a small amount of matter could release a huge amount of energy. The general theory of relativity, published in 1916, linked time, space, mass, and energy together. Time and space were no longer invariant; both were subject to gravity.

Looking through space, I also look forward through time. I see not what exists, but what has existed. I observe the Milky Way in the state it was in a thousand years ago, while an observer currently in the Milky Way and looking down at Earth would see a planet where human habitation has yet to appear. What is this world? How does it relate to the traditional arguments proving the existence of God?. Enormous changes also occurred in another area—at the atomic and subatomic levels. According to Newtonian physics, objects obeyed immutable laws, making their states predictable. However, the discovery of the electron and the subsequent development of fundamental particle physics and quantum theory led to the idea that the states of matter at the fundamental level were unpredictable. In other words, just as relativity destroyed the certainty of scientific conceptions of invariant time and space, the notion of matter having mass and predictability was threatened by the complete unpredictability of the states of tiny particles.

Thus, we have discovered a universe in which space and time, energy and matter are interdependent. Furthermore, we know that there are four fundamental forces in the universe – gravity, the electric field, the weak interaction force, and the strong interaction force within the nucleus. One of the goals of physics is to construct a theory that unifies all four of these forces and ultimately understand how this relates to relativity and particle theory. Furthermore, it is possible to separate different levels of organization within the universe. This is most clearly observed through the examples of the physical, chemical, biological, and social levels. Complex, integrated systems often behave differently from their constituent parts. In other words, is it possible to completely trust anything? That is the key takeaway from this new way of thinking about the structure of the universe. The very act of observation influences the observed objects. Separating one object from the rest of the universe is equally unrealistic. Everything influences everything – yet nothing can be accounted for. Therefore, ultimately, we must be content with approximations.

The consequences of these changes for religion are: In a world governed by predictable mechanical processes, God can be limited to the realm "before" or "outside" the world (natural theology does this precisely); it does not require God to be present inside the machine, even if God is attributed to the machine's creation and original design. But in light of the more complex and complete understanding of the world's structure provided by relativity and quantum theory, theistic thinking simply does not resemble scientific thinking (this is not too terrible, since, from a religious perspective, 18th-century theism was completely unfounded).

Characteristic of modern physics, holistic thinking also rejects the accusations of reductionism previously leveled against science by religion—in other words, it rejects the accusation that science reduces all complex phenomena to their constituent parts, and then claims that, because these constituent parts obey immutable laws, this is a complete explanation for the “behavior” of the complex whole. In other words, thinking that complex objects “behave” differently from simple objects does not allow consciousness to be considered “nothing more” than individual brain cells, nor does it allow the identification of a game of chess with a list of moves that each opponent can make. In summary, it can be said: firstly, the vast majority of Christian doctrines and arguments were formed before the emergence of modern science. Understanding them through the imagery of the Bible and Greek philosophy is easier; Secondly, the development of science is a consequence of knowledge acquired on the basis of empirical data and rational thinking. Such a view negates the power of authority, and some believers consider it a danger to traditional beliefs; thirdly, the world discovered by 20th-century scientific thinking created the idea that both Newton's worldview and the religious arguments that developed alongside it were limitations.

5. In the Methodology

Both religion and science claim to study reality and assert their truth. But what constitutes truth depends on how it is discovered. For example, the truth "2 + 2 = 4" is completely different from the truth in my job offer from last Thursday. The truth of the first is proven by its definition, while the truth of the second is based on data or the reliability of my memory. So what about religious statements? If someone says, "God is in my heart" or "Everyone has a Buddha-nature," we might ask whether the truth or falsehood of these statements can be proven, and if so, what kind of data can validate or refute them?

With scientific arguments, everything is much simpler. In "History of Western Philosophy," B. Russell observes this:

"The distinguishing feature of the scientific man is not what he considers to be true, but how and why he holds that view. His arguments are empirical, not doctrinal; they are based on data, not on intuition.". Furthermore, it is possible to critique parts of that statement: for example, one can argue to what extent, when constructing hypotheses based on empirical data, the scientist uses systematic deduction and to what extent relies on intuition. The sudden understanding of a previously mysterious phenomenon may be an intuitive act that can then be validated or refuted through the study of the available data. But Russell was generally correct in pointing out that the fundamental characteristic of scientific thinking, its prominent feature, is method, not result. If a scientist and a believer (even if they are the same individual) believe in the same thing, they do so for different reasons. To assess how the expectations of grasping truth offered by science and religion differ in form, one must consider their methods of thinking.

In science, it works based on rational empirical thinking – in other words, studying empirical data rationally. This process can consist of the following stages: (1) Observation and data collection: scientists try to minimize the impact of their specific hypotheses on the collected information, and when evaluating data, they try to eliminate factors unrelated to the research. For example, when testing a new drug, it is essential to have a group of test patients who are not given the drug but whose health is monitored. Without this test group, researchers cannot reliably confirm that the drug under study has a corresponding effect on the disease; (2). Forming hypotheses based on collected data: imagination and even intuition play a major role here; moreover, the same data can generate countless different hypotheses; (3). Conduct experiments to test the hypothesis: if the hypothesis is correct, similar data will lead to similar results; (4). Construct a theory to explain the experimental results: this is called induction; the degree of confidence that can be achieved by this method is limited; (5). Predict based on theory: if the theory is correct, certain consequences must be inferred from it. Evaluating these secondary results is used as important proof of the truth of the theory in question; (6). Verification - testing the theory by constructing new experiments: testing a theory through new experiments, sometimes based on new data, is often a lengthy process, through which the theory may need to be modified. Nothing can be asserted with absolute confidence. The more empirically a theory is tested, the greater the statistical probability of its truth. It is assumed that each theory will eventually disappear from the forum or will prove to be true only within a finite range of conditions.

The next fundamental method of science is induction. We are tempted by the assumption that we can simply collect factual data and then derive absolute truth from it by induction. Hume pointed out that induction itself is always insufficient to establish truth. His argument is simple: no matter how many times we verify a phenomenon, there always remains the possibility that it will not be verified the next time. Thus, having received a large amount of empirical data, the scientist assumes that there is some fundamental order in nature and constructs a corresponding hypothesis. However, this order remains only a hypothesis, because it is unprovable. We find a typical illustration of this theme in B. Russell's "Problems of Philosophy." He writes there that a hen is fed every morning, hoping that this will repeat before Christmas; But instead of that, they slaughtered it! Related to data, we never know if the data after Christmas will be like that!

Another important method of science is data interpretation. In the first half of the 20th century, the Wien Group put forward the view that only language describing reality has meaning. These philosophers emphasized the difference between analysis and synthesis – that anything not a simple logical conclusion needs to be substantiated by empirical data and verified by relying on it. Such a position reflects the profound influence of the triumph of scientific thinking. Regardless, the above viewpoint is primarily based on the assumption that there is a simple, unambiguous method for understanding and describing reality, and that the private interpretations and biases of scientists do not influence the information they receive. A number of modern philosophers (Quine, Popper) have criticized this view – the view that assumes the possibility of collecting uninterpreted data. For example, Popper demonstrated that any observation is nourished by theories, simply because there is no uninterpreted data. Even the selection of the starting data presupposes interpretation; the process of interpretation and formation is present from the outset. K. Popper pointed out that scientists progress not by focusing on obvious data, that is, by induction, but by formulating theories and testing their validity through actual data.

This notion that all data is already interpreted threatens two very important characteristics of traditional empiricist thinking. Firstly, Locke's argument is that consciousness is initially a tabula rasa (“blank slate”) gradually filled with information. Conversely, consciousness constantly creates images for the purpose of interpreting the information provided by the senses. Thus, comprehending the object already means interpreting it. Secondly, there is the argument of early Wittgenstein that language provides us with simple pictures of the external world. Conversely, how we perceive things leaves its mark on language – in other words, we use language creatively, and its use is part of the interpretive process. Therefore, neither emotion nor language functions simply as early positivists assumed. They are creative activities. As we know, the concept of the creative role of consciousness in the formation and testing of theories originates from Kantian philosophy. Kant pointed out that concepts, such as space, time, and causality, are an essential part of our way of thinking about the world: we attribute them to our experience. Thus, whether we consider the creative use of “language games” in the works of later Wittgenstein or the acceptance of the use of figurative and creative theories in Popper's work, we see a process that negates the simple collection of obvious data or the accurate description of the world. The language of science should not be considered a homogeneous and empirical language. It can be as rich as any other language, full of imagery and interpretation.

With its religious way of thinking, religion does not have a systematic method of understanding its beliefs. However, it can be said that it uses three sources: 1) Revelation - the belief in God directly revealing truth to humankind. Revelation can be found in scriptures or received directly from priests; 2) Personal experience: there is the realm of religious emotions, many of which lead people to communicate what they know; 3) Natural theology: the argumentation for specific tenets of belief based on reason and observation. The third origin is closest to the scientific method of thinking. However, the main difference between

them is that religious tradition provides believers (at least most of them) with symbols and language that allow them to experience things experientially. Furthermore, because the reasons for believers' loyalty to their beliefs are not entirely rational, believers are less willing to change their beliefs than scientists. Faced with the threat from the scientific method of thinking, religious thinkers tend to react in two ways: first, minimizing the factual content of belief; second, asserting that religion is based on belief, while human reason has little connection to it.

The second viewpoint is sometimes defended in light of the Christian doctrine of original sin as presented in "Being." From this, it is concluded that humanity's decline can only be due to a distorted [dualistic] reason, and therefore, faith may be the only path to salvation. This mindset is mainly characteristic of Protestant thinkers (in the 20th century, it is very typical in the works of K. Barth, and in the 19th century - of Kierkegaard), while natural theology (as presented by Thomas Aquinas) has been officially approved by the Catholic Church.

In short, the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes scientific thinking from religious thinking is that religious thinking is based on concrete conceptions of the world, while scientific thinking is based on the process of forming, evaluating, and modifying conceptions of the world. Scientific thinking is a method, while religious thinking is an attitude of fidelity to a specific conception. The difference in thinking methods might suggest that science asks the question "how," while religion asks "why"; in other words, science is concerned with data and causal relationships, while religion is concerned with meaning and purpose. However, it is all more complex because scientific thinking asks the question "how" to build an optimal general method for understanding the world – an optimal combination of models that allows for understanding things and phenomena and predicting their future. Religious thinking, in a sense, also seeks an optimal general method for understanding the world. However, there is a crucial difference between science and religion: scientific thinking attempts to eliminate the scientist's personal reaction to the object of study, whereas personal reaction is an inseparable characteristic of religious thinking.

6. In Teleological Terms

Science outlines the relationships between phenomena: one thing can be the cause of another; a combination of conditions is necessary for something else to occur. Science can even show how a particular phenomenon relates to the entire Universe. However, science cannot say anything about whether certain relationships were intentionally created for a purpose. Religion, on the other hand (at least to the extent that this is presented in teleological arguments), attempts to point out the purpose in the creation of the world, especially the purpose of humankind. If the early Universe had had fundamentally different characteristics, it would not be as it is now. If the scale of our planet, its distance from the Sun, its atmospheric composition, the amount of carbon, and beliefs—or any one of countless other conditions—were different, then humans would not have appeared on Earth. All of that is self-evident. But sometimes people attribute a particular turning point to this argument, a turning point that humanity can cling to when searching for signs of God's purpose and will in the Universe. This turning point is called the anthropic principle. This principle asserts that, for a form of human existence to appear in the Universe, all the fundamental characteristics of the world must be as they already are. Thus, we can start from the existence of humanity, then move backward by pointing out the necessary sequence of conditions. Believers can use the anthropic principle to demonstrate that without God's guiding hand, the evolution of the world in the direction necessary for the appearance of humankind would certainly be impossible; moreover, billions of other worlds could appear to replace our world.

In essence, the anthropic principle simply points out the simple interconnectedness of all things: everything is as it is, because everything else is as it is, and man is a part of this world. If you argue that the anthropic principle is proof that the world was intentionally constructed in such a way that man could exist within it, then representatives of any species could assert the same, but only for their own species. If the Universe were not as it is at some point, then an ant would no longer be an ant. Speaking on a larger scale, galaxies would no longer be galaxies!. Thinking about purpose and design is only meaningful if you can step back and recognize both the constructed object and the intentional designer. You must also have prior knowledge of what constitutes the construct in order to understand whether the object possesses the defining characteristics inherent in the design. If we cannot think about these three things, then to say that an object is constructed is nonsense. Of course, this has been considered in teleological proofs of God's existence.

From a religious perspective, the problem with considering the origin and nature of the entire Universe lies in the fact that we are constantly approaching the limits of what is perceivable. To say that at the beginning of existence the Universe was concentrated at a single point (the Big Bang theory) or that it possessed the absolute physical properties necessary for rational life to emerge—you are only stating that, and nothing more. Trying to say more—that is, going beyond the limits of what can be verified by empirical data— is, however, acknowledging that scientific thinking moves in the direction dictated by religious impulses. The search for a Universal Theory, that is, a unified explanatory theory, is not so far removed from religion's search for cause and no cause, or God—the one who brings the entire Universe into a unified purposeful act. However unfounded the experiment of merging scientific hypothesis and religious worldview may be, it still has the advantage of introducing religious impulse into the overall structure of the worldview as an integral part of that structure.

One of the major problems of religious thought, especially since Newton's time, is the separation of religious concepts from scientific and philosophical realism—either because theism separates God from the world, or because religion is entirely tied to emotions and values. If we think about the era before the advent of modern science, we see a world in which the tenets of religion and natural philosophy coincided. Both were largely influenced by Greek philosophical thought, and both spoke the same language. Specific viewpoints might be wrong from the perspective of today's high level of knowledge, but they were perfectly consistent with the prevailing worldview of the time. With the emergence of science and technology, and their achievements in constructing an effective and useful worldview, religious thought has developed a tendency to avoid worldviews that might contradict scientific data.

Religious thought values purpose and values, not data. In turn, this fosters the absurd notion of science as the source of all perfectly correct, factual, and accurate explanations.

7. Conclusions

Today, no one can deny that religious thought is related to the emotional aspect of life and to the study of human moral and spiritual responses to their experiences of the world, but this does not mean that theists cannot make arguments about the nature of the world—arguments based on their religious experiences. Such arguments can be studied in much the same way as scientific arguments, that is, by assessing whether they provide a rational explanation for experience, how widely they apply to explaining other aspects of life, and whether they can help humanity. When you consider life's complexity and richness—however strangely diverse its forms may be, developed on the basis of a simple fundamental structure—there arises a desire to give even the things closest to us such a high value that it begins to feel as though the entire Universe exists precisely because of them. And when we contemplate the fact that our planet will one day cease to exist, the question arises: what is the purpose of all this busyness? What is the point of life developing if it will inevitably perish?

Some argue that the ultimate task of science is to construct a "universal theory," that is, a rational explanation of all existing experience. However, in reality, it is difficult to understand how to determine whether this goal has been achieved, because true scientific thinking constantly studies new data, evaluating whether it confirms existing theories or requires their modification. These exceptional cases are the data from which new theories are built. Meanwhile, the general purpose of religious thought (to the extent that religion is seen as a collection of conceptions about the nature of reality and humanity's place within that reality) coincides with the purpose of scientific thought. To give clarity and meaning to Thomas Aquinas's entire worldview, the "immovable motive" and "cause without cause" are used as the basis for such a "universal theory." Furthermore, both natural theology and science endorse the fundamental assumption that human reason is capable of perceiving the world. We see that this very assumption has contributed to the emergence of modern science.

Finally, when assessing how scientific and religious thinking relate to each other, it is crucial not to equate religion with superstition. When Thomas Aquinas or Newton spoke of God, they did not reject their specific sciences along with their rationality, but rather attempted to integrate their knowledge into a unified view of reality.

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