



## SCIENCE AND RELIGION AS WORLDVIEWS

Are They Open and Inclusive?

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*By nature, religion is subjective, a private enterprise based on personal beliefs. By design, science is objective, a public enterprise based on controlled experiments.*

Gail Bernice Holland, in her book *A Call for Connections*

Science, as is, presents a partial view of the world. Religion as is, presents an exclusive view of the world. Science plus religion, as they are, cannot provide us with an open and inclusive collective worldview. These two worldviews, which profoundly influence our lives, will both need to be expanded if we are to change the direction the world is heading. But that still won't be enough, in my opinion.

This essay is part of my Process of Illumination (POI), creating an open and inclusive collective worldview one worldview at a time. I want to discuss science and religion, not science vs. religion. I believe an open and inclusive collective worldview will require both an expanded science, and an expanded religion --- and more.

Science and religion were both invented by humans --- in that sense they are both worldviews. Science and religion did not exist before human consciousness created them; we must not forget that. Since they were invented we have learned a lot about the world, the universe, the planet earth, the flora and fauna of the environment, and the human brain, mind and body. What we have learned should make a difference in our current science and religious worldviews --- if these worldviews are open to new learning.

And if we invented these worldviews with our human consciousness, we can modify them, update them, and even reinvent them --- if we choose to. Human inventions are not, or should not be, unchangeable. The history of both science and religion is not a history of open-mindedness and inclusiveness.

### **Needed: A Built-in Mechanism for Change**

The main message here is that all worldviews are based on human beliefs and knowledge. For these worldviews to be open, inclusive and able to evolve, they require a built-in mechanism for questioning, change and renewal. This means an open and inclusive way of seeing. That is the goal of the POI.

Open is defined as being receptive to new or different ideas. This means the ability to change. Inclusive is defined as taking a great deal or everything within its scope; comprehensive. This means being holistic, emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of the parts.

Instead of asking if scientific or religious beliefs are reasonable, rational, provable, or true, we should ask if they are open and inclusive. If a belief is not true but open, it can be changed. If a belief is true and open, it can still be changed when new truths are discovered. Exclusive beliefs, in either science or religion, are ignoring parts of the interconnected wholeness. Empirical evidence is not inclusive. God bless America is not inclusive.

It seems clear that science, religion, subjective and objective experience are all products of human consciousness. But this presents a strange irony. Science and religion were both created by human consciousness yet neither science nor religion knows what human consciousness is.

I believe we need more than an expanded science and religion. We need a *hard-to-define* relationship with the mystery of life. Maybe that is what spirituality is.



The term spiritual as explained by Rachel Naomi Remen: The spiritual is not the religious. A religion is a dogma, a set of beliefs about the spiritual and a set of practices, which arise out of those beliefs. There are many religions and they tend to be mutually exclusive. That is, every religion tends to think that it has "dibs" on the spiritual --- that it's "The Way."

Yet the spiritual is inclusive. It is the deepest sense of belonging and participation. We all participate in the spiritual at all times, whether we know it or not. There is no place to go to be separated from the spiritual, so perhaps one might say that the spiritual is that realm of experience which religion attempts to connect us to through dogma and practice.

Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it fails. Religion is a bridge to the spiritual --- but the spiritual lies beyond religion. Unfortunately in seeking the spiritual we may become attached to the bridge rather than crossing over it.

Perhaps religion and science are both a bridge to a more open and inclusive worldview. Maybe spirituality is on the other side of human consciousness. Are we attached to the bridge of science and the bridge of religion? If science and religion expanded to be more open and inclusive, would that help us cross over the bridge to spirituality? Of course I don't know. I think it is fair to say that both science and religion are showing signs of expanding. Where that will take us is yet to be seen.

I believe the future direction the world is heading will depend on many things related to this mysterious, unknown human consciousness. The future of science and religion will be a big factor. So will another unknown, spirituality.

#### **What Do You Think?**

In a way, each one of us has our own brand (worldview) of science, religion and spirituality. Can you define your brand? Is it open and inclusive? Should a built-in mechanism for change be part of all worldviews? Is it part of yours?

What do you think will determine the future direction of the world? How will science and religion be important factors? How will they be expanded? Or will they?

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