Are Science & Religion Compatible?
"A legitimate conflict between science and religion cannot exist. Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

Albert Einstein
We have identified some of the basic beliefs of both science and religion and have seen that they aren’t so different.

We are now going to turn our attention to the relationship between the two and ask what they are both seeking to understand and explain.

Read the quotation below.

"Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are here. The two windows give different views, but both look out at the same universe. Both views are one-sided, neither is complete. Both leave out essential features of the real world. And both are worthy of respect."

Freeman Dyson

What essential features of the world might science leave out when it tries to understand the Universe?

What essential features of the world might religion leave out when it tries to understand the Universe?
People often point to the scientific accounts and the Judaeo-Christian accounts of the origins of life and the origins of the Universe.

They seem to contradict each other so completely and so obviously that we can end the discussion by saying ‘science proves that religion is wrong’.

However, this is too simplistic a way of looking at it.

We have seen that science and religion are both trying to understand the Universe but in different ways. Religion can offer what science cannot and science can offer what religion cannot. Some would also argue that there is a lot of middle ground.

This does not mean that they contradict one another; it means that they are offering different ways of seeing the world, both of which are meaningful and valuable. Far from contradicting one another, they complement one another.

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Albert Einstein
Case Study: How did the Universe, and everything in it, get here?

“Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control.”

Martin Luther King Junior

Let’s have a closer look at this...
Read Genesis 1-2.3 and complete the first part of the worksheet ‘Creation and Evolution’.
There are two parts to Darwin’s Theory.

The Theory of Evolution - All species have evolved from a common ancestry.

Natural Selection – How this happens.
Inanimate Chemicals (primordial slime) → Bacterial Life → Multi-Cellular Organisms → More complicated plants and animals → Highly Complex Animals → MAN

3 billion years ago
Natural Selection

- Natural Selection is the mechanism of evolution. It is how evolution ‘happens’.
- Organisms/creatures/humans produce more offspring than can survive.
- The offspring are not identical: variations exist within them e.g. a litter of kittens are not all the same.
- Some of these variations are inherited, some are not.
- Some variations will help the creature to survive, some will not.
- Whether these variations are passed on is determined by the environment in which the animal lives.
- E.g. a snake which is camouflage is more likely to survive in its environment.
Survival of the Fittest

- Those animals that inherit beneficial characteristics are more likely to survive to adulthood.

- They can then reproduce and pass on these characteristics to their young.

- Over time this will increase the number of offspring with these beneficial variations.

- This is how new species can be formed from existing ones.
Find two characteristics of the following species which suggest that it has adapted to suit its environment.

- Duck
- Great White Shark
- Yourself

Now complete the ‘Evolution’ column on the worksheet.

Compare the two columns. What do you notice?

Should we take Genesis literally?

Do you think reading Genesis as a scientific document is how it was the intention of the authors?

What might be a more accurate interpretation of Genesis?
Dave Allen's thoughts about Adam and Eve – YouTube

Dave Allen doesn’t mention science explicitly. BUT...

....he interprets Genesis 3 (The Fall) in a particular way.

What observations does he make?

How does he interpret Genesis 3? What ‘lens’ is he looking through?
Myth

• What is a myth?

• Give an example of a myth.

• What sorts of things do myths teach us?

• How might it be useful to interpret the Genesis creation narratives and the Fall as myth?

• Important ‘universal truths’ about the nature of humans, our role in the world, our relationship to God (if you are a theist) and the nature of the Unmiverse itself?
Community of Inquiry

Stimulus

- Richard Dawkins -- The God Delusion – YouTube
- Reconciling Science and Faith - YouTube

Questions for discussion