EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF FAITH AND REASON: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Dr. Christian Maduabuchi Umeanwe
Department of Religion and Human Relations,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka,
Anambra State, Nigeria.
cm.umeanwe@unizik.edu.ng; drchrismadu777@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The intersection of religion and science has long been a contentious domain, with debates surrounding their compatibility and relevance. This study explores the challenges and opportunities arising from integrating faith and reason, examining the historical, philosophical, and cultural contexts shaping this complex relationship. It explores the conflicts and convergences between religious and scientific worldviews, and particularly, epistemological divides differing understandings of knowledge, truth and reality. It examines the different models of this interaction: compatibilist, conflict and independence models. It also analyses the influences of secularism, postmodernism and pluralism, as well as emergent perspectives on evolution, cosmology and neuroscience. This study contributes to ongoing debates, offering a comprehensive framework for navigating the complex relationships between religion and science. By exploring challenges and opportunities, it illuminates pathways for constructive engagement, fostering greater understanding, cooperation and social cohesion.

Keywords: Exploring, Intersections, Faith, Reason, Challenges, Opportunities, Integrating, Religion, Science.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the scope of science and religion and what interactions there are between them, we must at least get a rough sense of what science and religion are. After all, "science" and "religion" are not eternally unchanging terms with unambiguous meanings. Indeed, they are terms that were coined recently, with meanings that vary across times and cultures. Harrison (2015) said, before the nineteenth century, the term "religion" was rarely used. For medieval authors, such as Aquinas, the term *religio* meant piety or worship, and was denied of "religious" systems outside of what he considered orthodoxy. The term "religion" obtained its considerably broader current meaning through the works of early anthropologists, such as E.B. Tylor (1871), who systematically used the term for religions across the world.

The term "science" as it is currently used also became common only in the nineteenth century. Prior to this, what we call "science" was referred to as 'natural philosophy' or 'experimental philosophy'. Whewell (1834) standardized the term 'scientist' to refer to practitioners of diverse natural philosophies. Philosophers of science have attempted to demarcate science from other knowledge-seeking endeavours, in particular religion. For instance, Popper (1959) claimed that scientific hypotheses (unlike religious ones) are in principle falsifiable. Taylor (1996) affirm a difference between science and religion, even if the meanings of both terms are historically contingent. They disagree, however, on how to precisely (and across times and cultures) demarcate the two domains.

One way to distinguish between science and religion is the claim that science concerns the natural world, whereas religion concerns both the natural and the supernatural. Scientific explanations do not appeal to supernatural entities such as gods or angels (fallen or not), or to non-natural

forces (like miracles, karma or magic. For example, neuroscientists typically explain our thoughts in terms of brain states, not by reference to an immaterial soul or spirit.

Forrest (2000) reviewed that the naturalists draw a distinction between methodological naturalism, an epistemological principle that limits scientific inquiry to natural entities and laws, and ontological or philosophical naturalism, a metaphysical principle that rejects the supernatural. Since methodological naturalism is concerned with the practice of science (in particular, with the kinds of entities and processes that are invoked), it does not make any statements about whether or not supernatural entities exist. They might exist, but lie outside of the scope of scientific investigation. Some authors like, Rosenberg (2014) hold that taking the results of science seriously entails negative answers to such persistent questions as free will or moral knowledge. However, these stronger conclusions are controversial. The view that science can be demarcated from religion in its methodological naturalism is more commonly accepted, though it is not a dogmatic requirement, it flows from reasonable evidential requirements, such as the ability to test theories empirically.

Because both "science" and "religion" may have several definitions, discussing the relationship between science (in general) and religion (in general) may be meaningless. For example, Clark (2014) argues that we can only sensibly inquire into the relationship between a widely accepted claim of science (such as quantum mechanics or findings in neuroscience) and a specific claim of a particular religion (such as Islamic understandings of divine providence or Buddhist views of the no-self). Therefore, it is necessary that we move into conceptual clarifications of the terms used in the title of the research work.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In this conceptual clarification it is necessary that a careful definition will be done on the key words of the research title in a concise attempt for explanation. This conceptual clarification will help the researcher to express the contextual usages of the words of the research title and his views and intentions for the choice of words in his research title. The keywords of the research title are as follow:

1. **Exploring:** Here, it signifies a thorough and methodical inquiry into a subject or issue, involving: research and analysis, data collection and evaluation, critical thinking and synthesis, objective consideration of multiple perspectives, identification of patterns, relationships, and insights aiming to uncover facts, understanding, and informed conclusions. According to Oxford English Dictionary (2020), it involves the "systematic investigation and examination of a subject or issue" (p. 432). For Brewer & Hunter (2006), exploring involves curiosity, inquiry, and discovery (p. 12).
2. **Intersection:** Refers here to diverse concepts, disciplines, or perspectives converge, overlap, or intersect, fostering: cross-pollination of ideas, interdisciplinary dialogue, shared understanding, innovative solutions, holistic approaches, collaborative insights. Intersection enables integration, synergy, breakthroughs, intersection points spark creativity and progress. Merriam-Webster (2020), said that intersection is a point of connection, overlap, or meeting between different concepts, disciplines, or perspectives" (p. 234). Freeman & Stagg (2014) is of the opinion that intersection facilitates dialogue, exchange, and synthesis. (p. 78). Intersection also means, the convergence of diverse concepts, disciplines, or perspectives, creating points of connection, shared understanding and integrated thinking.
3. **Faith:** Faith is unwavering confidence, trust, and reliance on a higher power or spiritual guidance, core values and principles, personal convictions and intuition, trusted relationships and expertise, evidence-based beliefs and assurances. It is inspiring hope, resilience, and

assurance, faith nurtures inner strength and guidance (Oxford English Dictionary 2020), while according to Tillich (1957), it involves commitment, loyalty, and conviction (p. 1).

4. **Reason:** Reasoning is the process of drawing logical conclusions from available information, facts, and premises. It involves, analysing data and arguments, evaluating evidence and assumptions, identifying patterns and relationships, making informed judgments, decisions and considering multiple perspectives and alternatives. Effective reasoning requires critical thinking, objectivity, and sound judgment. It enables individuals to solve problems and resolve conflicts, make formed decisions and predictions, understand complex issues, concepts, communicate ideas, persuade others, adapt to new situations and challenges. Reasoning is essential in personal, academic, and professional contexts. Merriam-Webster (2020) opined that reasoning is a, "Rational thought, argument, or inference" (p. 392). According to Kuhn (1962) reasoning enables critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. (p. 1). On critical thinking, it means, evaluating information, identifying biases and considering multiple perspectives. On problem-solving, it means analysing situations, identifying solutions, and selecting effective strategies. Lastly, on decision-making, it means weighing options, considering consequences, and making informed choices.
5. **Challenges:** Challenges are difficulties or obstacles requiring effort, skill, or innovation to overcome. They test abilities and resilience, stimulate growth and learning, encourage creative solutions, foster adaptability and perseverance, develop problem-solving skills, and inspire personal as well as professional progress. Challenges can lead to transformation, achievement, and success. According to Oxford English Dictionary (2020), "Difficulties, obstacles, or problems that require effort or skill to overcome" (p. 216). According to Dweck (2006) challenges mean to, stimulate growth, innovation, and resilience. (p. 3).Challenges stimulate growth by pushing boundaries and comfort zones, developing resilience and adaptability, encouraging innovation and creativity, enhancing problem-solving and critical thinking, fostering learning and self-improvement, building confidence and self-reliance, promoting personal and professional development. Challenges help individuals to overcome fears and limitations, develop new skills and perspectives, strengthen character and resolve, achieve goals and realize potential, evolve and transform. Embracing challenges leads to transformative growth and self-discovery.
6. **Opportunities:** Opportunities are favourable circumstances or situations that facilitate, growth and development, progress and advancement, success and achievement, innovation and exploration, networking and collaboration, learning and skill-building, increased visibility and recognition. Opportunities can arise from, emerging trends and technologies, new relationships and connections, changing markets and industries, innovative ideas and solutions, strategic planning and initiative. Merriam-Webster (2020) said that opportunities mean, “Favourable circumstances or situations for achievement or advancement" (p. 316). Drucker (1967) said opportunities facilitate growth, innovation, and progress. (p. 23). Opportunities facilitate growth, innovation, and progress by, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking, providing resources and support, fostering collaboration and networking, inspiring creativity and idea generation, enabling skill development and learning, opening doors to new markets and audiences, promoting adaptability and resilience.
7. **Integration:** Integration simply means combining, unifying, or incorporating diverse elements or systems to create a cohesive whole, fostering: interconnectedness, efficiency, innovation, scalability, flexibility, collaboration and simplification. Integration enabled streamlined processes, enhanced capabilities, and sustainable growth, integration harmonizes disparate parts into a unified, high-performing entity. According to Oxford

English Dictionary (2020), it involves "combining, unifying, or incorporating different elements or systems" (p. 542). For Habermas (1984), integration enhances coherence, effectiveness, and understanding (p. 12). Integration enhances coherence, effectiveness, and understanding by simplifying complex ideas, precise communication, clear expression, reduced ambiguity, improved comprehension, fostering informed decisions and productive interactions. According to Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia dictionary, the term integration means, to form, coordinate or blend into a functioning or unified whole.

8. **Religion:** The term religion does not mean the same things among the religions in the globe. According to Sani (2007), "Religion…has no universally acceptable and satisfactory definition. Religion is looked at from different perspectives based on the angle which one understands it. It originates from the Latin words: *relegere* (to unite or link) and *religio* (relationship, bond)" (p.12). From its etymology, we can define it as means a link or a relationship between man and a being that exists which is greater than man. Man and religion are inseparable in all human cultures.However, according to Webster's Dictionary of English Language, religion refers to man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine or a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in communities. This shows that religion focuses on what is ultimate or absolute and taught of worship. According to Juergensmeyer (1972) opined that religion is relationships between the transcendent and men demands total submission and an absolute obedience. (p.23). According to Adeniyi (1993), Religion also, is the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him. It is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being. (pp.12-18). Similarly, religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.It is a system of beliefs, practices, and values related to the divine or transcendent in conclusion on this, Durkheim(1912) said that religion shapes identity, community, and morality (p. 1).

9. **Science:** Natural philosophers, such as Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Robert Hooke, and Robert Boyle, sometimes appealed to supernatural agents in their natural philosophy, which we now call "science". Generally, **science** is any system of knowledge that is concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and that entails unbiased observations and systematic experimentation. Science involves a pursuit of knowledge covering general truths or the operations of fundamental laws. It is knowledge attained through study or practice, or knowledge covering general truths of the operation of general laws, especially as obtained and tested through scientific method and concerned with the physical world.According to Oxford English Dictionary (2020) science is a, "Systematic study of the natural world through observation, experimentation, and evidence-based reasoning" (p. 654). Popper (1963) also opined that science, pursues knowledge, understanding, and explanation. (p. 1).

CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The intersection of religion and science has sparked intense discussion, revealing profound differences between these two disciplines. Philosophers and theologians continue to debate the nature of their relationship, questioning the extent to which religion and science complement or contradict each other. The key questions arise as the following:

i. Can religious beliefs foster scientific progress or do they inherently hinder it?

ii. Are religion and science mutually exclusive or intertwined?

Within the philosophy of religion, the science-religion dynamic is a pivotal concern. Scholars have identified three primary perspectives on their relationship:

i. Conflict: Religion and science are inherently at odds.
ii. Independence: Religion and science occupy separate domains.
iii. Integration: Religion and science can complement and inform each other.

It is necessary to look at the triune views of relationship between science and religion to enable dissect and rebuild them into a concept of understanding the unity between religion and science.

Conflict

According to Kuhn (1962), the first view sees the relationship between science and religion as one of conflict. (pp. 67-71). This perspective posits that scientific inquiry and religious dogma are inherently at odds. Also according to Durkheim (1912), a notable example is the historical dispute between the Ptolemaic geocentric view, endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church, and the Copernican heliocentric view, which led to Galileo's house arrest by church authorities (pp. 23-25). Dawkins (2006) said, another illustration is the ongoing debate between proponents of Darwinian evolution and advocates of creationism (pp. 145-150). According to the observation of Numbers (2006), In the United States, this conflict has manifested in court cases regarding the teaching of evolution in public schools (pp. 156-163).

According to Kuhn (1962), the conflict between science and religion arises from fundamental differences in their perspectives on reality. (p. 67). The conflict model posits two opposing views as follow: scriptural literalists who interpret biblical narratives as literal, historical facts (Numbers, 2006, p. 145) and scientific materialists who view science as the sole source of knowledge about reality, dismissing religion's role in factual understanding. (Dawkins, 2006, p. 150). As Émile Durkheim (1912) notes, "Science and religion are two distinct forms of knowledge, each with its own methods and objectives" (p. 23). Kuhn (1962) argues that scientific revolutions challenge traditional religious beliefs, leading to conflict. (p. 73). Dawkins (2006) contends that scientific materialism supersedes religious explanations. (p. 153). In contrast, Numbers (2006) suggests that scriptural literalism can coexist with scientific inquiry. (p. 160)

The dispute exists often on two levels: first, over which discipline or knowledge is qualified to describe the factual reality of the world; second, over what are the “facts.” Scriptural literalists argue for the supremacy of divine authority, while scientific materialists argue for the supremacy of scientific knowledge. Based on their view on the authority of knowledge, scriptural literalists accept all biblical narratives including miracles as factual events. Scientific materialists reject divine authority and miracles, and argue for the authority of the sciences and hold those findings as facts.

Here, there are two problems. First, there is no such thing as pure, un-interpreted fact. From phenomena, we choose and select some of them as facts and link them in a certain order or pattern. Human perception, cognition, and understanding are only possible based on the process of selecting and choosing certain phenomena as facts. In this process of cognition and comprehension, certain selection criteria are at work in human mind. Without a cognitive mechanism for categorizing perception and understanding, we cannot discern certain phenomena as facts.

Independence

According to the independence view, science and religion are distinct forms of knowledge. The independence view posits that science and religion operate within separate domains, employing

distinct methods and authorities. Protestant neo-orthodoxy and logical positivism exemplify this perspective. According to Barth (1936), a prominent Protestant neo-orthodox theologian who championed this view,

> Religion and science are disparate, dissimilar types of knowledge. Their aims, methods, and authority origins are entirely distinct. Barth's theology emphasizes God's transcendence and unknowability. Human knowledge of God is solely based on divine revelation. This separation between God and human understanding underscores the independence of science and religion. (pp. 15-25).

Scholars' views on the independence view of science and religion as distinct forms of knowledge are as follow: McGrath (2009) notes that Barth's neo-orthodoxy stresses the "absolute distinction" between scientific and theological knowledge. (p.120). Kuhn (1962) furthers to argue that scientific paradigms and religious frameworks represent distinct "disciplinary matrices" (p.102). Durkheim's (1912) sociological perspective highlights religion's role in shaping moral and social understanding, separate from scientific inquiry. (p.30).

Critics argue that this view may lead to intellectual compartmentalization, hindering interdisciplinary dialogue. Proponents counter that recognizing distinct domains enables science and religion to coexist without conflict. The independence view, exemplified by Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy, underscores the distinct nature of scientific and religious knowledge. This perspective acknowledges separate aims, methods, and authorities, allowing for a harmonious coexistence between science and religion.

Integration

Integration views science and religion as interconnected, addressing different aspects of human experience. Science explores empirical reality, while religion probes existential meaning and purpose. Together, they form a comprehensive understanding, fostering a holistic perspective on life and the universe, resolving conflicts through a consistent and coherent explanation.

According to Wilber (1998), the integral view sees science and religion as interconnected, addressing different aspects of human experience (p.15). Taylor (2007), Science explores empirical reality, while religion probes existential meaning and purpose (p.120). Also, Habermas (2002) said, together, they form a comprehensive understanding: science informs knowledge, and religion illuminates values, fostering a holistic perspective. (p.150). Barth (1936), this model integrates the conflict and independence views. Like the independence view, it recognizes religion and science have distinct approaches and knowledge types (p. 20). McGrath (2009), It also acknowledges conflicts and seeks resolution. (p. 105). For Rahner (1972), this approach presents a consistent, coherent explanation resolving conflicts based on science-religion differences. (p. 30).

Philosophy seeks to integrate diverse knowledge domains for a comprehensive understanding of reality. From metaphysics to epistemology, phenomenology, analytic philosophy, pragmatism, and deconstructionism, philosophers have pursued meta-knowledge, critically examining disciplines to unify human understanding. This quest for integrative knowledge underlies philosophy's central role in understanding complex reality. According to Kant (1787), Philosophy has traditionally sought to integrate diverse knowledge domains, pursuing a comprehensive understanding of reality. (p. 10). Various philosophical movements have addressed this endeavor as follow; according to Whitehead (1929) who argues that philosophy seeks "to frame a coherent outlook" (p. 15). Heidegger's (1927) concept of "Being" underscores the fundamental quest for integrative understanding (p. 25). Habermas' (1972) said that theory of communicative action highlights philosophy's role in integrating knowledge. (p.130). Philosophy's historical quest for integrative knowledge underscores its central role in

understanding complex reality. By exploring various philosophical movements and embracing meta-knowledge, we can foster a more comprehensive and cohesive understanding of human experience. Human experience cannot be reduced to a single discipline. Integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines is essential for understanding complex reality. By embracing interdisciplinary approaches and recognizing the limitations of individual disciplines, we can strive for a more comprehensive understanding of human experience.

LOGICAL POSITIVISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT IN SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Logical Positivism, rooted in Ludwig Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis Wittgenstein (1922), profoundly impacted the philosophy of science in the early 20th century. This movement categorized knowledge into three types as follow: Ayer (1936), empirically verifiable knowledge. (p.15). Carnap (1934), formal knowledge (logic and mathematics) (p. 12). Schlick (1932), non-verifiable knowledge (religion, ethics, literature) (p. 25). Logical positivists argued according to following scholars: According to Ayer (1936), a statement's cognitive meaning depends on empirical verifiability (p.20). Then Carnap (1934) said, verifiability determines a statement's meaningfulness (p. 15). While, Schlick (1932) opined that, statements in religion, ethics, and literature lack cognitive meaning due to non-verifiability. (p.30). Logical positivism's emphasis on verifiability led to a narrow definition of knowledge. Émile Durkheim (1912) said, sociological perspective highlights the importance of non-empirical knowledge in shaping social norms (p. 40).

Critics argue that logical positivism oversimplifies knowledge and dismisses non-empirical disciplines. Proponents contend that verifiability ensures scientific rigor and objectivity. Logical Positivism significantly influenced the philosophy of science, emphasizing empirical verifiability as the criterion for cognitive meaning. While its impact remains, criticisms and challenges from various scholars highlight the complexity of knowledge and the need for a more nuanced understanding.

Logical positivism lost its popularity in the late 20th century for several reasons. Nevertheless, the view of science and religion as two disparate, totally separate “language-games” remains influential in the philosophy of science. Under this view, religious language provides moral recommendations for a particular way of life, and scientific language provides prediction and control over natural phenomena; their purposes and functions are disparate and there is no interaction between science and religion; finally, there is no mechanism to translate one into the other and no common denominator. What issues are present in the view of science and religion as independent of one another? Each discipline has its relative autonomy. Each has its methods of validating knowledge. Although there are disputes over what counts as valid methods and forms of knowledge, each discipline has relative autonomy and its own integrity.Dilthey (1883), human beings are complex, unified entities, and their experiences cannot be fully captured by a single discipline (p.15). According to Habermas (1972), each discipline abstracts and simplifies specific aspects of phenomena using unique conceptual tools and schemas. (p.120). However, Gadamer (1975) maintains that, humans inherently seek to integrate knowledge from various disciplines into a cohesive narrative. (p. 25). Scholars emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. This evident in the assertions of the following scholars; Kuhn (1962) argues that paradigm shifts in science often result from integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines. (p. 150). Émile Durkheim's (1912) sociological perspective highlights the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and economic factors. (p. 40). Gadamer's (1975) philosophical hermeneutics stresses the need for interpretive understanding across disciplines. (p.30).

THE SCIENCE-RELIGION DIVIDE: A HERMENEUTIC IMPASSE

The contentious relationship between science and religion stems from a deeper, often overlooked issue: the hermeneutic dimension of human understanding. According to Polkinghorne (1994), Biblical literalists and scientific materialists alike neglect this crucial aspect, succumbing to naïve dogmatism (p. 12). This intellectual blindness hinders knowledge advancement. The following Scholars argue that the real disputes lie in authority of knowledge: What constitutes a legitimate source of knowledge? Secondly, factuality: How do we define and verify facts?

According to Kuhn (1962), these debates transcend religious and scientific domains, entering the realm of philosophical inquiry. (p. 67). The science-religion conflict presents an opportunity for introspection and critical examination of one's philosophical assumptions. According to Dawkins (2006), scientific materialism offers a comprehensive explanation of reality (p. 150). However, Émile Durkheim (1912), counters that religious understanding provides a distinct, yet valuable, perspective on human experience. (p. 23). Kuhn's (1962) paradigm shift theory illustrates how scientific knowledge is shaped by philosophical frameworks. (p. 73). Similarly, McGrath (2009) argues that theological perspectives inform our understanding of the natural world (p. 145). Also Numbers (2006) notes that the science-religion conflict often stems from conflicting philosophical commitments. (p. 160). By acknowledging and examining these underlying assumptions, we can foster a more nuanced dialogue. The science-religion divide is not solely a dispute between empirical evidence and dogmatic belief. Rather, it represents a fundamental disagreement over philosophical foundations.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the intersections of faith and reason reveals a multifaceted relationship between religion and science. Challenges arise from conflicting epistemologies and methodological differences. However, opportunities emerge when integrating religious wisdom and scientific inquiry. Interdisciplinary dialogue fosters nuanced understanding, contextualizing human experience within a broader narrative. According to McGrath (2009), by embracing the complexities at the intersection of religion and science, we can reconcile apparent contradictions, cultivate mutual respect, and uncover innovative solutions (p. 105). In the words of Barbour (1997), integrating these disciplines enriches our comprehension of existence, illuminating the intricate dance between faith, reason, and human understanding. (p.15). Habermas (2002) also opined, this synthesis invites a more holistic, inclusive, and enlightened worldview, fostering a deeper understanding of human experience. (p. 150). As philosopher-theologian Barth (1936) notes, "the relation between science and religion is not one of mutual exclusion, but of mutual enrichment." (p.25). Similarly, physicist-theologian Polkinghorne (1998) argues that, "science and religion are two complementary ways of exploring the richness of reality" (p.30). By embracing this integration, we can transcend unnecessary conflicts and cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the world and our place within it.

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