

Positive and sincere arguments for "rational" and "scientific" religion are sometimes presented by academic writers on religion. However, although such arguments are generally well-intended, and even though such arguments may bear merit as a positive and effective defense of religion, the principal logic of argumentation underlying this defense is thoroughly secular and exoteric. As a result of the widespread prejudice toward a secular (and scientific) and exoteric (and social) view of religion, such exoterically based pro-religious arguments actually epitomize the principal errors that also characterize even the anti-religious arguments that are the more common expressions of the secular mentality.

The exoterically based defense of religion is, in fact, a reduction of religion to secular purposes—and especially to the exercises of social morality. The advocates of this reductionism often propose that science, rather than the process (and the Great Realizers) of religion itself, is the appropriate measure of what is acceptable as religion. And, therefore, because science is both secular and exoteric, or limited to what is presumed to be natural, or material, or objective, or bound to the body-based and psycho-physical point of view, it is concluded (by the proponents of religious reductionism) that religion must be likewise (and only) secular and exoteric.

Both the practitioners and the critics of religion should understand that religion (even though it, like science, is also associated with systems, techniques, and the pursuit of understanding) is not, in the strictly modern sense of the term, science (or even a science)—and science is not a religious method (even though some may embrace science, and the scientific method, as a substitute for religion). Indeed, it can rightly be said that, whereas science is a pursuit of knowledge (and the power, or the relative freedom from helplessness, that knowledge grants to the knower), religion is the pursuit of a progressive un-knowing (of egoity)—and, at last (or Ultimately), religion is the Realization of the Most Perfect State of Non-knowing (or of Utter Surrender, Perfect Freedom, Unqualified Happiness, Unlimited Existence, and Absolute Consciousness).

In fact and in practice, science pursues (and is fit to pursue) knowledge about only the conditional world (and all conditional forms and states), and science pursues such knowledge in order to achieve power (whether positively or negatively) over the conditional world (and all conditional forms and states). Therefore, science, which is always enacted from a point of view that is inherently separate (or that is presumed to be inherently separate) from any object it investigates, is necessarily (or by definition) an ego-based and ego-serving activity, whether the "ego" thus assumed or served is regarded to be an individual or a collective one. By contrast, religion (in its potential true exercise) pursues (or must pursue) real (and, potentially, even Inherently Most Perfect) ego-transcendence, and the (either conditional or unconditional) Realization of Oneness with (or Non-Separateness from) Real God (or the Ultimate Source-Condition, or Truth, of conditional existence), and, thus (potentially, on the basis of that Realization), the Realization (whether conditional or unconditional), and the living demonstration, of Oneness with (or Non-Separateness from) the world (or all that arises in Real God, or in the Ultimate Source-Condition, or Truth).

Because of the inherent differences between religion and science, religion need not (and, indeed, cannot fruitfully) appeal to science for Truth Itself, and science need not (and, in general, is obliged not to) appeal to religion for the conditional truths (or objective facts, or natural laws) of science itself. It is naturally inevitable that some kind of dialogue occur between the practitioners (and the Realizers) of religion and the practitioners

(and the proponents) of science. It is also naturally inevitable that presumed knowledge and intellectual techniques acquired via scientific endeavor be used in the critical study of religion as an academic and historical subject—even, thus, producing useful criticisms of traditional cosmologies, archaic presumptions about the conditional world, exaggerated (or otherwise falsified) traditional reports, and so forth. And it is, likewise, naturally inevitable that the disposition and the Realizations of religion be brought critically to bear on the point of view and the results of scientific endeavor—even, thus, sometimes finding incidental likenesses and incidental corroborations between the independent findings of both religion and science. However, all such critical dialogues are a piecemeal and low-level process, and one that is entirely secondary (and not at all necessary) to the essential process that is either religion itself or science itself. And— although it would be best for everyone if scientists were, in the truest and most tolerant and benign (and increasingly esoteric) sense, religious—religious practitioners do not, in general, require a life much involved with science. An ordinary layman's grasp of scientific (or natural) laws and discoveries is functionally, practically, and socially sufficient for most people, even in an age dominated by scientific idealism (and scientific materialism). But, relative to religion itself, what is truly and always required is not more science and technology, but more real (and always advancing) religious practice, and, in every individual case, always increasing resort to a true Realizer, to the unique Grace available via a true Realizer, and to the process of evergreater (and Grace-Given) Realization.

Viewed in the light of such right understanding of both religion and science, it is clear that the religious reductionism characteristic of this "late-time" is a result of too much submission of religion to the review of science (even to the degree of subordinating religion to science). Such subordination of religion to science (and to secularism in general) typifies and epitomizes the most characteristic errors of judgement relative to religion and life that typify and epitomize the much discussed (and much suffered) "modern mind" of Man. That mind is identified with the bodily-based ego, and, therefore, it is prejudiced toward scientific materialism, secular humanism, and every kind of idealization of the potential of the natural world and the natural human being.

Ultimately, the limitations of all arguments for "secularized religion" are the limitations inherent in the body-based point of view (and, especially, the point of view associated with the first three stages of life). The philosophy and/or the religion anyone proposes is limited (or otherwise defined) by the stage of life in which (or, at least, for which) he or she truly stands. Science itself (and the so-called "modern mind" in general) stands firmly in the general context of the first three stages of life. Anyone's philosophy or religion can be clearly understood (and its limitations or merits rightly appraised), if the particular philosophy or religion is properly examined and assessed relative to the seven stages of life (as I have proposed, Described, and Revealed them). Indeed, if this were done, then the relative persuasiveness or nonpersuasiveness of any particular philosophical or religious proposition or argument would be seen to be based on the developmental stage of life of the proposer (or arguer)—and, also, on the developmental stage of life of the one who, in any instance, regards (or receives) that proposition (or argument).