

TO JUDGE IS HUMAN

God is the immemorial refuge of the incompetent, the helpless, the miserable.
They find not only sanctuary in His arms, but also a kind of superiority,
soothing to their macerated egos; He will set them above their betters.
-H. L. Mencken

Should one trust in faith over science? Or should one trust in science over faith? I think these two questions sum up the antagonism between science and religion. The answer, in my opinion, can be found by rephrasing these two questions.

Should one trust in clergy? Or should one trust in scientists? The answer to both questions is a categorical no! Humans are fallible. There is not a person alive who is not to some degree, prejudiced, dishonest, stupid, greedy, irrational and ignorant; myself, no exception. In sum, I think it is a safe assumption to argue that human testimony, in of itself, is not completely reliable.

Second question. Should one ignore the evidence? Or should one consider the evidence? The answer to the first is no. And to the second, yes. Physical evidence has none of the handicaps of human testimony. Its presence tends to keep people honest and realistic. There is a word of caution though. Physical evidence cannot speak for itself; it requires human interpretation. And a warning: To ignore evidence is the surest way to invite dishonesty and false conclusions.

Despite Jesus' advice not to judge, every waking minute of our lives we have to judge and make judgments. We listen to testimony; we look at the evidence; we make decisions; and we act. Then we reevaluate the results of our actions; it's a continuous unbroken process. In a sense, we act as jurors and scientists everyday of our lives. It is not foolproof, but it is the best system possible within our limitations.

Evidence can be misinterpreted when we think it is self-evident. It can be staring us in the face and we don't see it. Sometimes we look at the wrong direction. Other times we don't want to look in any direction. Some evidence is impossible to analyze, but we attempt it anyway. In the final analyses, it is whatever we do with the evidence which determines our fate.

There is a singular quality about evidence which makes it what it is: It comes to us through any combination of our external senses-sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. When it is not evidence is when we stimulate thoughts without use of sense input. The differences are between what is real and what is imaginary. Or between what is natural and what is supernatural.

The key difference between religion and science, I argue, is that religious ideas are based on tradition and testimony exclusive of evidence; while scientific ideas are based on evidence and its discovery and interpretation. Said another way: Religion is authority centric whereas science is reason and experience centric. No two formulas could be more different and neither could their respective accomplishments.

A believer might say, so what! Science does nothing for us morally and spiritually. That's false propaganda too. It takes the most negative view of human nature.

Every day experience tells us that humans are naturally cooperative. There will always be a fringe criminal element, but on the whole, humans prefer cooperation over confrontation. If we humans were naturally bent on destruction, we would have destroyed ourselves a long time ago. In fact, our market economy could not exist if the human animal had anti-social instincts.

Where we do see evidence of massive human immorality is whenever people organize themselves under authority rule. The history books do a pretty good job of cataloging the wars and misery caused by the corruptive temptations of political and religious organized power. Scientists may disagree, but you won't find them killing each other over it.

As for spirituality, the religious definition is impossible to achieve. That's why clerics find themselves intense about too much materialism and not enough spirituality. Our bodies are dependant on material reality.

Spirituality is one of those vague religious terms, a better term is *contentment*. The religious way of finding contentment is by escaping into a world that exists only in words. The scientific way is by understanding the physical realities and dealing with them on the basis of reality. Admittedly, many have found contentment by self deception through religion. But better results can be achieved by sticking with reality all the way.