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ASIM KURJAK and FRANK A CHERVENAK
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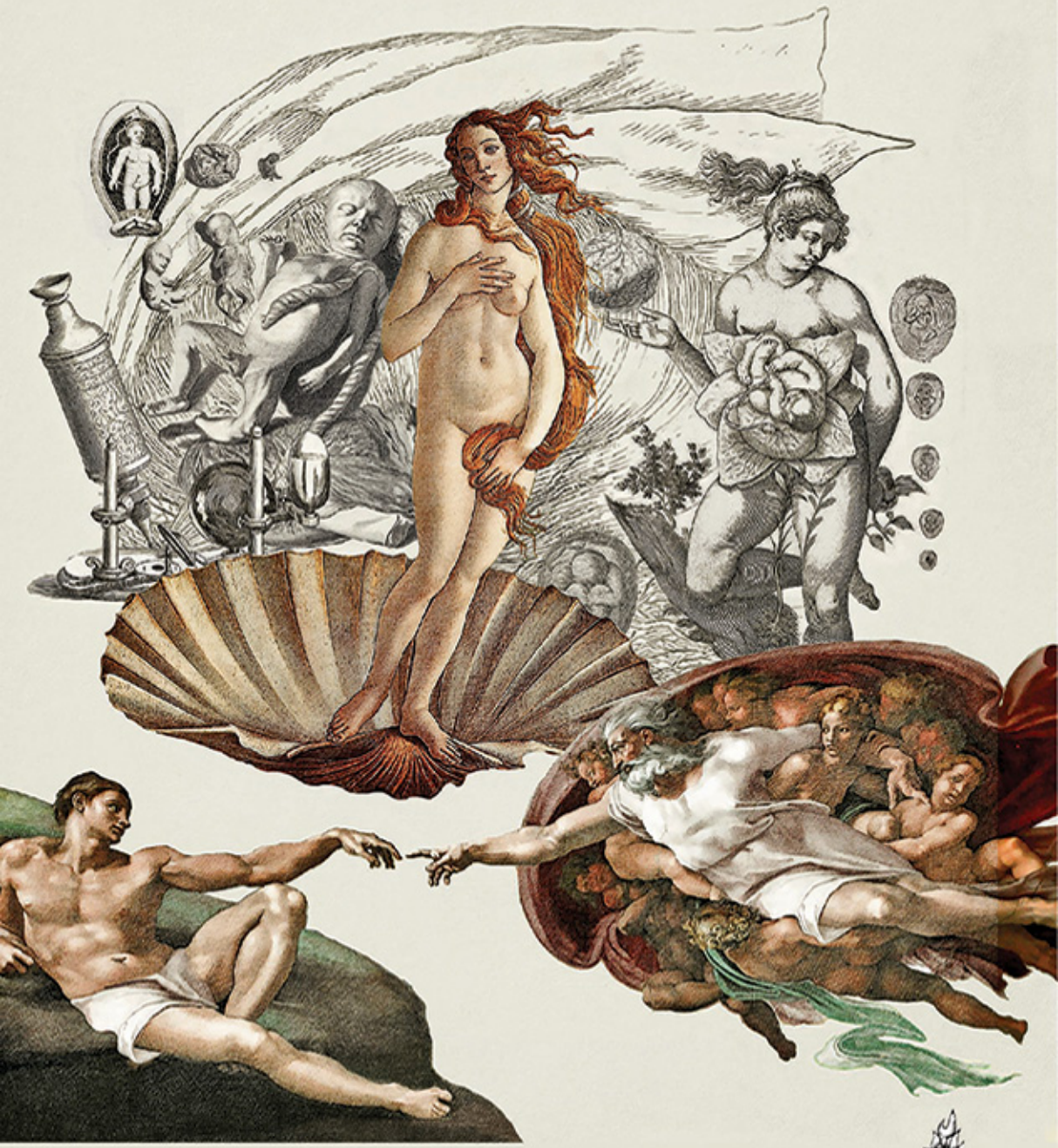
SCIENCE and RELIGION

Synergy not Skepticism



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CHAPTER 1

On the Relationship between Science and Faith

Muhamed Filipović

The question posed in the title of this short essay is, on the one hand, a question regarding the relationship between the two most important forms of human knowledge of the world and understanding of our relationship toward the world in which we exist and toward other people. On the other hand, this is one of the most important and essential, and, at the same time, most complex and most difficult questions for the entire human race that human thought can pose. Given the scope of the relationship between science and religion and the challenges of its complexity, it is no surprise that, despite all our efforts, a satisfactory solution has not been found. There still exist some doubts regarding this relationship, because of differences in the nature of these two basic types of attempts to understand our position in the world and our human tasks in it.

It is clear that we are, in every sense, a part of the world in which we exist as creatures. On this simple fact science and religion agree. Consider first the scientific perspective on what it means to be part of the world. Science offers us an understanding of the physical nature of our being and the world, including biological structure and function. The scope of science is ambitious, aiming to understand the boundaries suggested by the world as a whole, or what we call nature in its entirety: its entire structure, laws, and the modes of existence governed by those laws. Science aims to understand the fundamental and comprehensive law that determines all forms of existence of the world and its laws, what quantum mechanics or astrophysics calls the formula encompassing all laws of the relationship between the modes of existence in nature and all its emanations. Science stands on the threshold of gaining knowledge about the origin of the cosmos as a whole and the basic law of its existence—its dissemination from the primal, for us unavailable, unit of the existence, which is the source of the so-called Big Bang, as consequence of which everything been unfolding for billions of years, including everything from subatomic and atomic particles to the stars and planets.

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A recent experiment conducted in Switzerland in a large particle accelerator within a powerful electromagnetic field was an attempt to produce an event in the laboratory the conditions thought to have held at the time of the Big Bang.

From a scientific perspective, we are only a very small part of this infinitely large, unrestricted and unstoppable movement called natural process and the laws that govern them. However, the source of existence itself remains out of reach and possibility of definition. This raises the question of whether the origin of the universe is indeed material or of some other type and mode of existence, of such power that it could produce the post-Big Bang effects. The current state of science cannot rule out this possibility.

Perhaps the source of the Big Bang is ineffable. This opens us to sources of belief that have no basis in objective data, but rather in the actual experience of being human and therefore in human nature. Such belief allows us to connect the fundamentals of understanding the nature of the cosmic phenomena and beliefs and the whole world of culture as our way of being. The aim is to harmonize the Bing Bang phenomenon, on the one hand, and, on the other, the phenomenon and wonder of the human mode of being.

This is a special mode of being that appears as the basis for the emergence of a special world in which different laws, namely spiritual, cultural and moral laws, also govern human nature. Such beliefs do not have and need not have an immediate evident and objective foundation. As such, they are not established scientifically, as beings in the world given to us as objects of thought. Instead, such beliefs must, in some way, be derived from the mode of our existence, since it is the only mode provided to us. It is only on such a basis that one can pose the question of how we *should* deal with the world as the medium of our existence. In such a world, human rather than natural laws govern. The task becomes exploring whether our relationship to others as human beings should be understood to differ from the mode of existence of other beings as objects in the world.

From this perspective, science is a special and fundamental form of our relationship with the world as a material object, a pre-given entity and mode of being that our thinking has the power to describe and analyze. Answers to scientific questions can be given. But there is more to human experience of the world than the descriptions and analyses of science. This is because the beliefs described above cannot depend solely on validity that comes from the natural law, that is, from the way that everything takes place in the natural medium.

These beliefs also depend on miracles, taken as evidence of the existence of a human world that derives from the act of creation, in which world the "spirit instrument," that is, the word, plays an immense role. Thus, we find both in the Bible and the Holy Qur'an that "in the beginning was the word

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and the word was with God." The word, the central act of the spiritual mode of being, is the source of existence. For example, there is the announcement of the divine truth in the Qur'an by the word *Iqra*, that is, *read*, *speak*. This means that that the truth of human existence starts with speech coming from Allah (SWT).

The world defined by the word of God separates religious thinking and its sources in the sphere of belief from the sphere of science. The result is two different forms of belief: (a) beliefs about the cultural world created by the Word of God; and (b) beliefs generated by the scientific investigation. The former are about mastering natural laws of civilization and its creation. The latter are about mastering natural laws that govern the material world.

The relationship between religion and science should be understood in these terms. The ambition of science is to master the material world. The ambition of faith is to master man. From the difference between these two ambitions emerges the difference between science and faith arises and it is my belief that, by its very nature, this difference can never be overcome. The scientific way of thinking and forming a relationship with the world that derives from science leads us to the attitude of ruling with the world, but only within the world. The religious way of thinking and forming a relationship with the world leads us to an attitude of peace through reconciliation with the world and among human beings, which requires the absence and rejection of any kind of violence. Science and religion should therefore be understood as two important, but very different, forms of human cognition. Science requires that the immediate, evident and realistic data are carefully observed and then mathematically processed on the way to determine the properties of material things. The sciences have established a special language that defines, explains and determines their subject and that language is called mathematics. In other words, the language of science is mathematics. Religion requires faithfulness to the revealed Word of God. This Word is the language of faith, which is starkly quite different from mathematical quantification. The language of faith is qualitative cognition, which means experiencing and understanding the Word of God, which cannot be measured.

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SCIENCE and RELIGION
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This book addresses the complex, sometimes fraught, relationships between science and the world's faith communities. The authors, including professors and clinicians from major world religions and diverse countries have written penetrating and accessible scholarly accounts from the perspectives of major world religions, the history and philosophy of science, sociology and anthropology, astronomy and mathematics, philosophy and theology, and major medical specialties. Many other books are skeptical, if not hostile, about the relationships between science and religion. This book is deliberately different: it provides exciting new ways of thinking about the synergies between science and religion.



Asim Kurjak MD PhD currently serves as Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Medical School Universities of Zagreb and Sarajevo. Dr Kurjak has published more than 500 papers in peer review literature. His papers have been cited 7,000 times in Science Citation Index. He has authored, co-authored or co-edited 113 books. He is president of International Academy of Perinatal Medicine and director and founder of Ian Donald Inter-University School of Medical Ultrasound. He is editor-in-chief of Donald School Journal of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology. He is a regular fellow of World Academy of Art and Science and European Academy of Sciences and Art. He has received a doctor honoris causa from Universities in Banja Luka, Budapest, Barcelona, Bucharest, Montevideo, Athens, Tomsk, Buenos Aires, St Petersburg, Moscow, and Tirana.



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Co-editors



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ISBN 978-93-5270-275-6