

When Religion is Meaningful and When Religion is Detrimental

Authors : Tennyson Samraj

Abstract : The intent of this paper is threefold: (1) to propose the Epicurean tenet that beliefs associated with God are to be detached from the transcendent God, as the basis to end religious conflicts; (2) to project John Hick's advice that no one has monopoly over religious claims, as the basis for religious tolerance and (3) to present the common sense approach to respect religion without disrespecting science. Religious claims create societal tension on two matters: conflict between believers and conflict with the sciences. Anyone interested in the two fundamental questions related to consciousness and cosmology as to how and why the universe exists will have to deal with science and religion. However, while science addresses the question of how the universe came into existence and how it works, religion addresses the question of why the universe exists. If religion is a quest to understand why the universe exists, then we must address the question as to when religion is considered meaningful and when is it considered detrimental. Is there a relationship between why we choose to live and why the universe exists? Science and Religion are partners in defining our life in the context of the universe. Science without Religion limits itself to knowing 'how' the universe came into existence without questioning 'why'; Religion without Science limits itself of knowing 'why' the universe exists without knowing 'how.' Is it possible to detach beliefs about God from God? When religious claims are understood in the context of the questions that necessitates the answers, religious claims can be understood as being separate from the transcendent God. This paper purports that this Epicurean tenet provides the impetus to address the questions that necessitate religious claims. This helps us to explain the relevance of why we believe in what we believe; define the relationship between the self, soul and the sacred; and establish the connection between this life and the after-life in the context of life-beyond-this-planet.

Keywords : religion, epicurus, John Hick, relevance of religion

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