



## Is Science Compatible with Free Will? Part Two

Quantum Physicist Speaks on Science, Freedom, and Faith

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Can the study of free will help to promote dialogue between the "new Atheists" and people of faith? Antoine Suarez, a Swiss quantum physicist, philosopher, and bioethicist, says that it can.

Suarez is the co-editor, along with Peter Adams (founding member of the Thomas More Institute in London), of the recently published book: "Is Science Compatible with Free Will? Exploring Free Will and Consciousness in the Light of Quantum Physics and Neuroscience." He also serves as the director of the Center for Quantum Philosophy in Zürich, and academic leader of the Bioethics program of the Social Trends Institute in Barcelona, New York. His experiments on the foundations of quantum physics have been realized by Nicolas Gisin's group at the Lab of Quantum Optics of the University of Geneva.

In this second part of his interview with ZENIT, Suarez discussed the role of science in helping to promote dialogue (click [here](#) to read Part One of this interview):

ZENIT: Many "new Atheists" claim that science and religion are incompatible. Can a discussion on the compatibility of free will and science help to open a dialogue between "new Atheists" and people of faith?

Suarez: Yes it can.

There is a fascinating debate between the Sidney's Cardinal George Pell and the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins on Religion and Atheism. The Debate was held on April 9, 2012, at the TV channel of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

On the side of Religion there was an expert in theology and Catholic faith, George Pell, who is also well informed about science. And on the side of Atheism there was an expert in Evolution, Richard Dawkins, who does not have, as he acknowledges, an extended theological back ground, but in my opinion has a very good feeling for crucial and still open theological questions.

A most interesting moment of this debate was when Pell made the statement that "He [Richard Dawkins] continually talks as though God is some sort of upmarket figure within space and time. Now, from 450, 500 BC where, with the Greek philosophers, God is outside space and time."

Dawkins responded, saying: "We are struggling - we are all struggling, scientists are struggling - to explain how we get the fantastic order and complexity of the universe out of very simple and therefore easy to understand, easy to explain, beginnings.[...] a God, a creative intelligence is not a worthy substrate for an explanation because it is already something very complicated and it is no good invoking Thomas Aquinas and saying that God is defined as outside time and space. That's just a cop out. That's just an evasion of the responsibility to explain. That's just setting out what you want to prove before you have even started."

George Pell speaks of God using the term "outside space and time." Richard Dawkins replies that this term "is just an evasion of the responsibility to explain."

However, neither Pell nor Dawkins make any reference to the recent quantum experiments. If speaking about "outside space and time" is a "cop out," then also quantum physics is a "cop out." I think it would very useful if both theologians and evolutionary biologists become informed about what is going on in the research about quantum nonlocality. This could really help to open a dialogue between "new Atheists" and people of faith. Dawkins acknowledges that evidence for agency from "outside space and time" would prove God, but claims that there is no such evidence and therefore "setting out" agency from "outside space and time" means to beg the question. Nonetheless who is begging the question is Dawkins, since in quantum physics we have reached a point where "the responsibility to explain" obliges us to accept agency from outside space-time. In other words, Dawkins clearly states that if there is such a thing like agency from "outside space and time", this would prove God. Now we have experimental evidence that "such a thing" exists. Consequently Dawkins himself provides us with a magnificent proof of the existence of God.

ZENIT: As a Catholic scientist, what role does your faith play in your work, specifically on the topic of free will?

Suarez: I have the deep conviction that the three passions governing my life are compatible with each other: the desire for freedom, my religious faith, and science. For me, it would be difficult to live were I to realize that in science there is no place for freedom or faith.

I believe that my existence cannot be explained exclusively by material principles; somehow I share in a non-material, spiritual dimension. If I accept this, I consequently have to accept that the movement of my lips, my tongue, my eyes, when I am speaking to you now, cannot be explained exclusively by a chain of temporal causes going back to the Big Bang. This means: one cannot claim to be a free being, or a believer, without intruding on scientific territory. Anyone who believes in God or a spiritual human soul cannot honestly claim that faith and science are two separated realms (two "Non Overlapping Magisteria"). On this point I agree with Richard Dawkins: even rejecting any fundamentalism or creationism, as I do, one cannot help acknowledging that the domain of religion and that of science overlap to some extent. But (by contrast to Dawkins) both faith and science are vital for me. So I conclude that a science excluding freedom and religion is likely not to be the last word in scientific knowledge.

For me working to show the deep harmony between science and Christian faith is the most marvelous adventure of the history of human knowledge. We are at the dawn of a new era where science and religion will go hand in hand to the benefit of each other: the best is still to come.

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