

Gresham Lectures 2017-18
Divinity Lecture 1

Are Science and Faith At War?

Reflections on a Post-Truth Culture

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Thomas Nagel

“It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God, and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”

Keith Yandell

“A religion is a conceptual system that provides an interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, bases an account of how life should be lived given that interpretation, and expresses this interpretation and lifestyle in a set of rituals, institutions and practices.”

José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955)

“Scientific truth is characterized by its precision and the certainty of its predictions. But science achieves these admirable qualities at the cost of remaining on the level of secondary concerns, leaving ultimate and decisive questions untouched.”

Edward O. Wilson

“We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom. The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers, people able to put together the right information at the right time, think critically about it, and make important choices wisely.”

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts . . . they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill
Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric.

Ian Barbour

Fourfold taxonomy of understandings of the relation of science and religion:

Conflict

Independence

Dialogue

Integration

Mary Midgley

“We cannot see it as a whole from above, so we peer in at it through a number of small windows ... We can eventually make quite a lot of sense of this habitat if we patiently put together the data from different angles. But if we insist that our own window is the only one worth looking through, we shall not get very far.”

[End]