

Is Science a Religion?

Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk

<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/is-science-a-religion/>

In a lot of debates – and I'm writing on climate change, so this might be a key example – each side says, "If only the other side would accept the facts, would accept the science, then they would change their mind. What's wrong with them? I mean, this is the science, this is fact, this is truth. They must be on the payroll of the fossil fuel industry. They must not even care about the future of our children. They must be so wrapped up in their own self-interest and so deluded and susceptible to confirmation bias, unlike me, who is open-minded and objective. If only we could convince them of the facts."

And the other side – most of you probably are not on the other side, maybe some of you are – they say pretty much the same thing, that the entire scientific establishment is in a collective delusion that excludes any data that contradicts the dominant theory. And if you formulate a different hypotheses you are out of the job, you can't get funding, you can't get grants, you can't get a seat at the policy table.

A friend of mine was with his family and they watched Fox news 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He was like, "You know, at the end of that week I could see how in that reality bubble you would have to be crazy to vote for Hilary Clinton."

So here we are at the Science and Nonduality Conference. Why are people so attracted to science and nonduality? Or science and spirituality? It awakens a kind of a hope for a reconciliation between these two sundered, divided aspects of reality. And we would like to say, "Yeah, these nondual realizations, or my spiritual life, or my experiences of – as Dude was saying this morning – discarnate entities, like these are valid after all. So really, maybe what we are hoping for is a kind of a validation in addition to a joining together of a split reality.

So I have to ask, "Why is this validation so important?" It's because science is the mean legitimizing institution of our culture. You could even say it's the religion of our culture in the sense that it is what converse righteousness to anything, like a scientific policy, a scientific reason for something that means it is true for real.

Now science itself says, "No, no, no, we are not a religion. We are the opposite of a religion. Religion takes things on faith, but we ask the world. We perform an experiment, we take nothing on faith, we are objective." What goes missing here, is that this objectivity is based on metaphysical assumptions that are unprovable, just like any religion.

Among them objectivity, that there is a world outside of ourselves that is separate from our asking of the questions. And our questions don't change the reality that we ask about. That an experiment is repeatable. That the intention of the experimenter is irrelevant. That there is a division between observer and observed. And that the observed is constant in relation to the observer.

Another metaphysical assumption is that everything that is important or worth knowing can be measured and quantified.

There are lots of other ways in which science is suspiciously similar to a religion. It has a canon of holy texts. It has its own specialized mysterious language that only initiates can understand. It has an initiation ordeal, call it graduate school, upon which you finish and you get a ceremonial name change. It has a system for the indoctrination of youth. It has deified saints and martyrs, you know Galileo, Newton, Einstein. It has schisms and heretics. It has the faithful lay believers, who actually don't understand the esoteric knowledge of the religion, but they believe in it anyway. It has a

divinatory practice for the attainment of truth, called experimentation. It has a body of ritual on top of it, that is called technology. I mean the whole thing!