Mollifying Neuroscience and Christian Faith: An Emergent Monistic Claim for Free Will and the Soul

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Modern neuroscience makes it difficult for one to support a case for substance dualism regarding the existence of a soul and free will. The neuroscientific evidence stems from several experiments in which test subjects were instructed to perform a simple voluntary movement. Scientists consistently observed neurological antecedents preceding the subject's conscious decision to perform the action. An examination of these experiments and the conclusions drawn will show several key inconsistencies that weaken the extreme anti-conscious will claim. However, it is important to not reject the neurological evidence against substance dualism, but instead discover a new perspective (e.g. emergent monism) that coincides with both science and the Christian Gospel.

"God of the Gaps" refers an argument often used by atheists describing the tendency for some Christians to use inconsistencies or "gaps" in knowledge as evidence of God's existence. When science is able to progress and fill in these gaps with natural explanations, this removes God further from the conversation.

Unfortunately, many Christians succumb to this tendency when discussing the existence of the human soul and free will. Scientific evidence shows neurological antecedents preceding an individual's conscious will to act. Many scientists claim this implies the human soul or human free will is illusory. These scientists are referred to as the Anti-Conscious Will lobby and they are lead in part by psychologist Daniel Wegner neuroscientist Benjamin Libet.[1]

Critiques of the experiments and data behind this extreme claim will show there is not sufficient evidence to support the idea. Gaps exist in this anti-conscious will claim; however it is important for Christians to not use this gap as an argument for God's existence. In addition, Christians should not reject the neuroscientific evidence solely because it implies their traditional beliefs to be false. A philosophical view of human free will and the soul entails one that coincides with both scientific evidence and Scripture.

Emergent monism, the belief that our higher consciousness is an emergent property from the natural process of evolution and that this soul is not distinct, but unified with the body, provides the best perspective to ease tension between the implications derived from scientific research and the Christian Gospel.

The Anti-Conscious Will Lobby

Many scientists conclude that a conscious will does not exist. Modern science postulates that the perception of conscious will results from random synaptic firings in the brain; thus, conscious will is a mere "epiphenomenon or an illusion".[2] Daniel Wegner and Benjamin Libet are the key proponents of this position. Wegner, a psychology professor at Harvard, attacked free will based on data from several psychology studies and concepts to show

[1] Clarke 2014, 11

[2] Torrance 2003, 134

conscious will has no causal effect on human nature and is therefore illusory. Wegner showed humans have an innate drive be considered as causal agents. This drive can lead humans to assume conscious control over external behavior and therefore responsible for the action.[3] Along with this evidence, Wegner focused on the experiments performed by Benjamin Libet, which have been used to attack free will and the existence of a soul.

In the 1960s, a group of scientists observed a slow build-up of electrical potential occurring in the brain almost a second before a voluntary action was conducted by test subjects. Benjamin Libet became very interested in this electrical change that is commonly referred to as readiness potential (RP). In the Libet experiment, subjects were instructed to perform a simple movement such as flexing their fingers at any time they wished. During the experiment, Libet monitored the brain activity of the subjects both leading up to the time of the movement and after the movement was completed.[4] Since this experiment, many scientists have concluded our brains initiate even the simplest movements before we are aware of our conscious decision to conduct the movement.

However, to claim that one does not act freely when choosing to perform a simple act such as moving a finger can be a difficult concept to grasp. Therefore, before critiquing Libet, let us first come to terms with the determinist claims he made. Not every aspect of a movement or action is conscious. Imagine yourself walking home. For a large interval of that time your brain is unconsciously causing your legs to move in a walking motion. The action may be voluntary, but your brain has the capability to automate this process In addition, many times we can be unconsciously influenced by our surroundings. Psychologists have shown if subjects placed in a room see a library painting on a wall they tend to talk more softly. It has also been shown that when subjects smell cleaning agent, he or she will keep the environment in which they are placed cleaner.[5] Libet's experiment serves to explain these ideas and the range to which they apply.

In his experiment, Libet instructed experimental subjects to flex their fingers or their wrists while he would monitor their brain activity, specifically the RP. Subjects would be asked to estimate the time they consciously made the decision to move (W). The subjects had the freedom of when to perform the movement but were instructed to pay close attention to the time they became consciously aware of the will to move. Libet observed something peculiar when comparing the onset times of RP and W. During his experiment, Libet found that the RP began about 550 msec before the action took place while W occurred only about 200msec before the movement.[6] Libet believed this implied that conscious decisions to act are not the true cause of movement. He concluded "unconscious processes appear to play the causal role in our actions, implying our traditional notion of conscious will is an illusion."[7] Daniel Wegner, in response to the data recorded by Libet, states "conscious will is just a feeling without causal potency, a post hoc interpretation, an illusion."[8] He goes on to say that the human brain creates the illusion of free will by confabulating motivations for the action.

Many scientists have used this platform to attack the existence of the mind or soul. The conscience is associated with

[3] Clarke 2014, 19
[4] Clarke 2014, 11
[5] Clarke 2014, 10
[6] Clarke 2014, 11
[7] Clarke 2014, 11
[8] Clarke 2014, 19

the supernatural and is mostly considered independent from the natural brain processes. Wegner's statements and the Libet experiment seem to attack and defeat certain dualistic and monistic views of the soul. Interactive dualism, the belief that the soul is a distinct immaterial entity in the body that plays a causal role in decision making, would postulate that the mind is the source of the action, causing the neurological activity that results in motion. Dual aspect monism, the belief that the soul is not distinct, but one with the body, would propose a more synchronized firing of the conscious will and neurological activity. However, Libet's experiment and several follow up experiments have showed neither are the case. Scientists conclude that instead of dualism or monism, the remaining alternative is epiphenomenalism, the view that mind events are a mere byproduct of brain events, an illusion that has no causal role.[9] In addition to the experimental evidence, there are two popular case studies used to address this problem of the existence of the soul.

This first case is that of Phineas Gage. While working on the railroad in the 19th century, Phineas Gage suffered an unfortunate accident when an iron rod went through his head and severed most of his entire left frontal lobe. Gage survived the incident, however he suffered extreme side effects. After the incident, Gage lost much of his social and personal skills. The physician working on his case described him as a completely different person than the Phineas Gage he once knew.[10] The second case is that of a 40-year-old schoolteacher charged with pedophilia. The teacher had once made sexual advances towards his stepdaughter. He was kicked out of his house and forced into a 12-week sex addiction program to help control his sexual urges. However, he soon failed the course objectives and awaited prison. Days before he would be taken to prison, he made a trip to the hospital complaining of unsteadiness and strong drives to rape his landlady. He did not want to force her sexually but feared he might. He had a headache and some subtle neurological signs that prompted the staff to order a brain scan. The results showed the teacher had a large orbitofrontal brain tumor. They quickly prepped him for surgery and removed the tumor from his brain. Following the surgery and treatment, the man showed a significant decrease in his extreme sexual drives and reported no excessive sexual urges. Two years later, it was discovered he had begun collecting child pornography again. A brain scan revealed the tumor had returned in the same spot where it originated several years prior.[11] These two cases appear to show a significant causal relationship between brain functions and how an individual 'is.' From a naturalistic perspective, unconscious processes in the brain are the underlying cause for all human morality and action. With this being the case, considering the neurological antecedents discussed earlier, it appears free will and the soul have in fact no causal role in human nature.

Neuroscience claims that the human experiences of free will are delayed responses informing of the brain's decision after the event has occurred. However, even with these conclusions, consciousness is not necessarily denied. The experiments and case studies merely show that consciousness does not affect behavior or play a causal role in behavior. Human actions simply result from unconscious brain processes. Most accept that unconscious processes can induce bias and influence decisions.

However, the anti-conscious will lobby, led in part by Daniel Wegner, takes it

[9] Clarke 2014, 10
[10] Murphy 2013, 35
[11] Allison 2010, 639

to the extreme in saying the unconscious is the sole cause of our actions.[12] A counter to this extreme claim should serve not to discredit all neuroscientific data and evidence, but instead to dampen the extrapolated conclusions drawn from the data. An in-depth look at the experiments shows they are not sufficient to fully support the claims proposed by Wegner and the Anti-Conscious Will lobby.

Criticisms of Wegner and Libet

Daniel Wegner's claims and the Libet experiment are not free from criticism. According to Peter Clarke, the first common criticism is that scientists conclude the RP (readiness potential) causes both the will to move and the movement, and represents the unconscious decision that determines the action. This causality however has never been proven. There are several reasons why the onset of RP does not necessarily cause movement or the will to move. The first is that electrical stimulation of brain regions can cause movement but rarely causes the subject to will to move, suggesting RP itself does not cause the will to move. Second, if RP has a causal effect on W (decision of will to move), then the two variables should be highly correlated. Instead, trials with an early onset of RP did not consistently show early onset of W. Third, in the experiment performed by Libet and his team, the finger movements of the subject triggered the storage of the RP data. When RP occurred but resulted in no movement, this data was erased. The only data recorded were RPs that resulted in voluntary movement. This fails to address the possibility that an RP alone is insufficient to cause movement. Last, RP may reflect a general expectation. RP may not be the unconscious decision, but instead a state of readiness.[13] One problem with Libet's experiment that he himself noted was that after the onset of the RP (unconscious decision), subjects showed the capability of vetoing this decision. This implies an influential role of the conscious will. There is also another problem of judging the time of awareness. Critics point out that not only is W very difficult to define but its determination is very subjective and unreliable. Estimation of W depends partly on neural activity occurring after the movement, which shows the difficulty of relying on subjective recall after the event.[14]

Even if the Libet claim is validated, there remains a large debate about the philosophical implications it holds. The Libet experiments may point to evidence of brain activity prior to a voluntary action; however, critics state that Libet's claim is irrelevant to the question of free will and responsibility.[15] Free will commonly refers to various choices that should be made following intentional consideration and thought as each choice often entails certain moral implications. In Libet's experiment, subjects were not making moral decisions; they were not even deciding whether to make a move or to not make a move, the only question was when. The main critique of the claim for anti-conscious will is that if *all* our actions and thoughts are results of unconscious processes (random synaptic firings of the brain), then *all* actions and thoughts are meaningless. This statement is self-defeating as it not only applies to the subjects of the Libet experiment, but this claim must also be applied to the data collectors, observers and the scientists making the claim against the existence of free will and the soul.[16] Daniel Wegner states our conscious will is an illusion produced by the brain's confabulation of motivations. However, in a similar fashion,

[12] Clarke 2014, 19
[13] Clarke 2014, 17
[14] Clarke 2014, 13
[15] Clarke 2014, 17
[16] Clarke 2014, 22

our eyes fill in pattern gaps all the time, yet we do not claim our vision to be an illusion, but constructed. Memory in the same way is an active, constructive process in which gaps are filled in to create a coherent account of what we experience. In further criticism, Wegner's claims are based on experiments conducted with subjects in artificial, meaningless situations or with people who have damaged brains. His results are insufficient to support his bold claim that conscious will is always illusory even in ordinary situations and in people with normal brain function.[17] Unconscious mediated biases exist and it is widely accepted that they influence our behavior. But to say conscious will plays no role at all is a vast overstatement that is not supported by sufficient data.

A Path to Resolution

These critiques of the claims made by Wegner, along with several critiques of the Libet experiment, do not serve to discredit all neurological evidence against the efficacy of free will, but instead to mollify the extremist view to a more temperate and objective one. Extremist claims such as those made by Wegner seem focused on abolishing traditional thought about the existence of free will and the soul.

This philosophical conclusion goes beyond the scope of the data and it is important to know that Wegner's claims do not entirely represent all neuroscientists or philosophers, many of whom show a particular intermediacy on the subject. Scientists are not metaphysicians and should not be expected to take a stand on the metaphysical connections between mental and physical items such as whether conscious intentions supervene on physical states. Even philosophers are not entirely and uniformly certain about what free will is exactly. If that is the case, then scientists surely are not either. One thing is for certain though, they all reject substance dualism.[18]

Substance dualism is the belief that the soul is distinct from the physical body and has a causal role in human morality and action. Case studies such as the ones discussed above as well as raw scientific data make it difficult to construct a strong case for substance dualism. It is well accepted that a RP occurs in the brain before the individual becomes "aware" of the decision. However, it is important to take data and information for what they are and not extrapolate beyond their scope to accomplish an objective. These neurological antecedents initially do appear to be a concern to those who advocate free will. The common idea is that for us to act freely, our conscious will must be the initial source of the consequential processes and ultimate action. Therefore, the issue is the source of the action.[19] To address this issue, it is important to re-evaluate what the RP is and any causal relationships between the RP and conscious will and the subsequent action.

When we accept this scientific evidence in its raw form, the question is not anymore do we reject or accept the data, but instead what perspective of the soul and free will fits best with this data as well as the scriptural witness and our understanding of it?

In order to discover a philosophical perspective that coincides with both scientific evidence and Scripture, we must first address an apparent problem with a traditional view held by some Christians. James Dunn, a British New Testament scholar, claims that our mindset is very similar to that of the Greeks many centuries ago. The Grecian approach was geared toward a partitive account of human nature, questioning what the essential *parts* are that

[17] Clarke 2014, 22
[18] Mele 2012, 432
[19] Mele 2012, 423

make up a human being. However, biblical authors address more aspective accounts.

According to Dunn, biblical authors considered each 'part' to stand for the whole person even if perceived from a certain angle; they were also concerned with humans in relation to the world, to one another, and especially to God. Paul's notion of distinction between Spirit and flesh is not with soul and body but with two ways of living, one being a path of conformity with the Spirit of God and the other to the world.[20] Another traditional belief very prevalent in the Christian church today is the belief of a distinct soul existing in one's body that upon death will float up to Heaven. However, many exegetes of Scripture do not support this view. This view of the soul, effectively substance dualism, originated in the writings of the Greek Philosopher Plato.[21] He believed in a one-stage eschatological view in which after death the soul immediately ascends from the body to Heaven. Biblical scholars believe Scripture instead points to a two-stage view that includes death and an intermediate period until the bodily resurrection. This may imply dualism; however, there are other alternative philosophical perspectives that may fit this view too.[22]

Biblical scholars agree that the correct perspective is one that agrees with our current understanding of Scripture. Most believe this entails affirming possible supernatural intervention for resurrection, potential immortality of human nature and an ultimate metaphysical body-soul duality sufficient to allow a two-stage transition to everlasting life.[23] However, the question of the state of the soul still remains unanswered and many scholars and philosophers remain divided on the subject.

Theologians often choose Theistic Evolution (TE) as a way to ease the tension between scientific findings and Christian faith. Theistic evolution states that God used science, data, events and processes of biology and physics to create humans. With this perspective, there is ideally no conflict between science and Christian doctrine. TE has played a great role in easing tension between science and Christian scripture, however many theists will argue that any naturalist or physicalist accounts violate the message of the Christian Gospel. They argue that if natural processes, even those guided and upheld by God, brought about creation of the human and hence the soul, then this gives humans a lack of meaning and purpose. If humans were not created through supernatural acts of an intervening divine power (e.g. God), they believe it is implied that humans were not created for eternal life and to live in communion with God, as Scripture states.[24] However, I believe this is not the case.

Just because the immediate process prior to the resulting creation was a physical force does not mean it did not come from divine, supernatural action. If you trace the source of evolution back to the Big Bang, this leads us to the impossible question of where all this energy or matter came from before the 'bang?' Nothing in the natural realm can be the cause of itself; therefore this places us in the realm of the extra-natural or supernatural. If I may postulate that God was the initiating source who caused the Big Bang, set the laws of physics and biology in a way to create organisms in a beautiful complex fashion, leading to an emergent property we refer to as the soul that inhabits human bodies and allows them to seek and live in communion with God the Creator, then I do not see how this might

[20] Murphy 2013, 33
[21] Allison 2010, 638
[22] Cooper 2013, 480
[23] Cooper 2013, 489
[24] Cooper 2013, 480

degrade human nature and meaning. This argument is not used to prove God was the cause of the origination of the universe, but it is merely a postulation showing that if the immediate process leading to the creation of the man and the soul was of a physical nature, this does not degrade human purpose or rival the Christian Gospel. With that being said, one cannot propose a philosophical perspective that coincides with Scripture without including some room for supernatural involvement. In proclaiming TE, one must argue for supernatural action to some extent. In proposing a minimal supernatural involvement from God, divine forces ultimately must play a causal role in creation, salvation (e.g. incarnation and resurrection) and ultimately eternal life in God's Kingdom. One cannot argue entirely pure physical naturalistic concepts and explain these ideas while remaining coherent with Scripture.

Developing the Correct Philosophical Perspective

Needing both a natural perspective as well as a supernatural perspective allows us to engage several choices in philosophical perspectives that agree with Scripture. Philosophers use both dualism and monism to address this problem. Each has various sub-categories that differ to certain degrees. A discussion and examination of each perspective and any sub-categorical perspectives should lead us down a path that will hopefully provide a more holistic view that neither clashes with scientific evidence nor Scripture.

Dualism itself does not refer to a specific philosophical theory about human nature, but it is the common globally held belief that souls are distinctly separate from the body and can exist without them, perhaps by supernatural divine action.[25] The main type of dualism that is common to most is called substance dualism, which means humans are a compound unity of two things, a material body and an immaterial soul, which has a causal role on the former. The immaterial soul is sometimes referred to as the "Ghost in the Machine". This perspective supports the common belief that upon death, the soul is released from the body to its appropriate supernatural destination. This view, contrary to popular belief, is not supported by scholarly exegesis of Scripture; it is predominately derived from the writings of Plato. In addition, neuroscience provides strong evidence against substance dualism.

Another form of dualism is referred to as emergent dualism. This perspective states that God did not originally create the soul as a distinct, immortal substance, but made it evolve naturally from the body and dependent on it. Emergent dualism appears to be a viable perspective as it does not clash with scientific evidence nor does it appear to disagree with Scripture. Again, just because human nature or the soul arrived from natural physical processes, does not take away from the potential divine authority and design that was involved in the creation of the human as the image bearer of God.

I propose that if God supernaturally installed and supplied the laws and materials of nature to bring about humans so that he might have a relationship with them and live in communion with them for eternity, then it does not disagree with the Christian Gospel. Dualism, in its general sense, is commonly discredited in the scientific community. However, emergent dualism is an alternative without this problem. There are other alternatives as well.

Contrasting dualism is monism. Instead of perceiving the soul as a distinct entity from the body which one possesses, monism proposes the opposite, in that the two exist as one. Monism is a broad

[25] Cooper 2013, 485

perspective as well as dualism, and can be divided into various categories. The first is physicalism. Physicalism states that humans are material beings and the soul is generated by physical energy of the body operating within the laws of physics and biology.

From this perspective, physicalists often make a choice. One can believe that consciousness is reducible to a byproduct of brain function or one can choose to reject this belief and claim consciousness to be irreducible (non-reductive physicalism). Many non-dualists, like Nancey Murphy, prefer non-reductive physicalism.

Philosophers choosing this perspective take neuroscience seriously without accepting the reductionistic implications.[26] Non-reductive physicalism appears as a viable option as it does not clash with scientific evidence nor does it disagree with the scriptural witness; however, some point out problems with this monistic view. Jaegwan Kim at Brown University states non-reductive physicalism is self-contradictory. One cannot argue that all causality is physical yet claim thoughts, feelings and emotions are irreducible.[27]

Other monistic alternatives to consider.

In addition to non-reductive physicalism are two other forms of monism, dual aspect monism and emergent monism. In dual aspect monism, there is only one entity, a human person, which is not composed of two different substances, but can be viewed from two different aspects, the internal subjective and external objective one. As stated earlier, neuroscientific studies seem to discount dual aspect monism as well, which postulates a synchronization of conscious awareness and brain activity in performing an action. Emergent monism is very similar to emergent dualism, stating that the higher levels of consciousness are emergent properties of physical energy from the Big Bang and evolution. This higher level of consciousness is not seen as a distinct entity from the brain, but exists as one with the brain only inhabiting a different realm. A problem with monism is the lack of synchronization between neurological activity and conscious will. However, a revaluation of emergent monism in relation to scientific evidence will show its validity in mollifying neuroscience and the scriptural witness.

Rectifying Reductionism and Scripture

Theologians commonly dismiss naturalism or physicalism as a non-viable perspective regarding the existence of the soul. The reductionistic ideas embodied in these perspectives are believed to endanger both Christian thought and the foundation of society, if the reduced material is said to play a causal role. Reductionism of consciousness is an anathema to many Christians and theologians, however I do not believe reduction of the consciousness or the soul to be the demise of Christian faith or society for that matter. Siding with emergent monism, I believe this higher order of consciousness, which is unique to humans, is the result of emergent processes occurring through evolution. If this immaterial soul were an emergent property of evolution, and if one can fully explain how emergent properties come about via the evolution of complex organisms, then one would be able to reduce this immaterial soul down to the physical processes from which it came.

If this is the case, I recognize the initial shock and foreseen consequences many might experience. However, in the Christian faith, I do not see that this position undermines Christianity. Instead, it provides a new thread of realization that gives further insight into the mind of a Creator who encompasses all scientific theories, laws and knowledge. In a secularist's view,

[26] Torrance 2003, 131

[27] Torrance 2003, 132

reductionism however results in an unavoidable hopelessness. Historically we have seen the difference in hope between secularists and Christians from an eschatological stand point concerning the meaning and purpose of life on earth. The hope here that lies in the Christian perspective is that if one can reduce the mental to the physical through explanation of emergent properties occurring via evolution, then one is merely reducing the mental to physical processes, molecules and laws that all were installed by God in the beginning of time in the hope that he may create sons and daughters of God in his own image and that they may live in communion with him and all of Creation through a higher level of reflexive consciousness. In this sense, emergent monism would fit scientific evidence for evolution and explain how the immaterial soul or consciousness came into existence. Whether Christian or non-Christian, a reducible conscience does not erase human value. Though reducible, the conscience, free will and even soul still exist in emergent monism. These entities may be able to be explained at the most miniscule level, but it is this conscience that gives humans the unique ability to empathize and live in communion with each other and the Creator if they choose to do so.

The other issues to address with emergent monistic principles are the lack of synchronization of neurological activity in the brain and the conscious will and how emergent monism speaks to eschatology in a way that agrees with Scripture.

Emergent Monism: The Valid Perspective

Scientific studies have shown that neurological activity precedes the time one becomes consciously aware of their decision. Many have viewed the soul as a "Ghost in the Machine". Traditional thought proposed the "Ghost" tells the machine what to do, however this can now easily be rejected. Through experimental results, it appears the "Machine" actually works before the "Ghost" does. Is this to say that unconscious brain processes wholly determined the action? No, this only reflects the order in which this occurs. The experimental data has shown that the will has the capacity to override the "Machine" (RP). If the conscious is able to override the unconscious decision, this does not mean that the conscious is necessarily separate, only that it has influence on the brain processes and vice versa. Despite beginning at different times, the conscious and the unconscious are one entity, constantly influencing each other in a way that decisions are never entirely determined. If the soul and the physical body are in fact one entity, this imposes a problem concerning the separation of the soul from the physical body upon resurrection after death.

Many state that one problem with monism is that ultimately it cannot avoid dualism. There are many different views of the soul and it can be difficult to mend these views compatible with the two-stage eschatological view of Scripture. I discussed the physicalist aspect of emergent monism and why it is important, however here is where you see the importance of the integration of supernatural involvement. For the soul to be sustained by God, it does not need to be a complete, independent, or naturally immortal, but only subsistent. This means the soul it is capable of being a sufficiently distinct part of the body so that separate existence is metaphysically possible even though this is not naturally possible.[28] Unless of course our physical earthly bodies are resurrected for eternal life, it is correct to say monism cannot ultimately avoid dualism. I do not however believe this poses a problem. For when the end of time has

[28] Cooper 2013, 485

come as Scripture proclaims, what relevancy will natural laws hold when an omnipotent God trumps evil, makes peace, and raises the dead to life?

Conclusion

Contrary to popular belief, reductionism of human consciousness is not the demise of the Christian faith and emergent monism can serve as a path to reconcile new neuroscientific evidence and Scripture. Many scientists and philosophers dismiss free will and the soul as an illusion, a result from unconscious processes occurring in the brain. However, inconsistencies in the experimental data and methods result in a shaky foundation for these extreme claims. The evidence does appear to show the "Machine" actually works before the "Ghost", however no causal relationship between RP and the will to move has been proven and therefore cannot be assumed. The implications of the evidence vary from moderate to extreme, but it is important not to first dismiss the inconsistencies and gaps for evidence of God and second not to fear accepting the evidence because it conflicts with any faith based views. It is important to wrestle with the concepts and discover a new alternative perspective to substance dualism, which coincides with both neuroscientific data and the Christian Gospel. From evolution to neuroscience to Scripture, emergent monism can be used to reconcile conflicting theories that cause tension between each other. The reductionistic implications accompanied in emergent monism are neither a threat to Christianity nor society.

As a Christian, I feel more comfortable in making claims that many are quick to dismiss, for in my faith I find a hope. A hope in a God who created me in his image via a more beautiful and intricate process than merely "poofing" me and my soul into existence. No, instead he used immensely complex laws, processes and molecules to create me as well as my surroundings. I do not see this as an impediment to the meaning of my existence, but as an opportunity to be able to learn and investigate these processes and laws, tracing back my existence through a web of interactions all pointing back to an omnipotent creator who started it all with a hope of building a relationship with me.

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