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Evolution & Religion - Are We Asking The Wrong Questions?

Dr. Sean Carroll, a Professor of genetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, talks about the discourse of evolution and religion.

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Dr. Sean Carroll, a Professor of genetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, talks about the discourse of evolution and religion. He's shared a podium with a Catholic theologian on the subject and both agree that the real questions we should be asking are about our collective humanity and role in the world, in the light of our common ancestry. What role can theology and religion have and contribute to that discussion?

Featured Scholar:

Dr. Sean B. Carroll is the Allan Wilson Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is an American evolutionary developmental biologist, author, educator, and executive producer.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

ENGLISH

Why be a biologist? Because in the realm of life is, you know, one of the more interesting dimensions of the universe. Right? Here we are in a world that has all sorts of living creatures and we are one of them. So biology is concerned with, in many ways, how life works at all sorts of levels.

It's not observing and saying "well I think it works this way." It's devising experiments that penetrate into how something works. And experiments being devised by lots and lots of people and cross-checked by other people that give us a cumulative, increasing understanding of, of how life works. And, you know, it's pretty

obvious how that can conflict with other narratives, other origin stories for humans that have been around much longer than evolutionary science.

I've shared a podium with, say, a Catholic theologian, "well the evidence for evolution is overwhelming. Now, let's talk about the theological implications." So I think the discussion that's really interesting between religious thinkers and scientists is, is after, getting over this question of – well is, you know – did evolution really happen. The more interesting question is: well how should we think about the role of humanity and the role of individual lives in our meaning and purpose here in light of evolution, in light of our evolutionary history? And what role does theology and religious thought have to contribute to that?

I think that's the open territory. You know, the conflict, which, you know, has a bit quite, you know, has a 150-year history, between evolutionary thinking and certain strains, certain branches of religious thought, you know, stuck there is just not an interesting place. But beyond there is a real interesting place and that's where – a lot – not only is there dialogue for scientists and religious leaders to have conversation, but I think it invites everyone else into the conversation. I think it invites their congregations and, you know, believers and non-believers alike to the table.

SPANISH

¿Por qué ser biólogo? Porque el reino de la vida es una de las dimensiones más interesantes del universo, ¿no? Aquí estamos en un mundo que tiene todo tipo de creaturas vivientes y nosotros somos una de ellas. La biología se ocupa de muchas maneras, en cómo funciona la vida en todos los niveles.

No se trata de observar y decir: "Bueno, creo que esto funciona así". Se trata de elaborar experimentos que penetren en cómo funcionan las cosas. Y los experimentos elaborados por muchas personas y comparados por otras personas es lo que nos da un entendimiento acumulativo y creciente de cómo funcionan las cosas. Y es bastante obvio como eso puede entrar en conflicto con otras narrativas, otras historias sobre el origen de los humanos que han estado entre nosotros mucho más tiempo que la ciencia evolutiva.

Compartí una conferencia con un teólogo católico: "Bueno, la evidencia de la evolución es apabullante. Ahora, hablemos de las implicaciones teológicas". Creo que la discusión realmente interesante entre pensadores religiosos y científicos es ir más allá del hecho de que, bueno, la evolución fue real. Una pregunta más interesante es cómo debemos pensar el rol de la humanidad y de las vidas individuales en relación a nuestro significado y propósito a la luz de la evolución, a la luz de la historia evolutiva. Y cuál es el rol que el pensamiento teológico y religioso tiene para contribuir.

Creo que ese es el nuevo territorio. El conflicto que tiene bastante, unos 150 años de historia, entre el pensamiento evolutivo y ciertas luchas, ciertas ramas del pensamiento religioso que están atascadas en un lugar que no es muy interesante. Pero más allá, hay un lugar muy interesante, y allí es donde... mucho... no solo hay diálogo para que los científicos y líderes religiosos tengan una conversación, sino que creo que invita a todos a la conversación. Creo que invita a la mesa a las congregaciones y a los creyentes y no creyentes por igual.



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