

‘Why Religion Is Natural and Science Is Not’

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Pondering the *cognitive* foundations of science and religion offers reasons for highlighting humans’ maturationally natural knowledge. By the time they reach school age, human beings seem to have knowledge about many important matters that is automatic, that is intuitive, that is based on little, if any, evidence that they can articulate, that does not seem to depend on any culturally distinctive support, and that is, in part, virtually definitive of what constitutes normal human cognitive development. This maturationally natural knowledge plays very different roles in science and religion, whether the focus is on their cognitive *products* or the cognitive *processes* that each engages. Science traffics, usually sooner but always later, in representations and forms of inference that do not rely on the deliverances of maturationally natural capacities. The sciences yield verdicts that largely overthrow the deliverances of these capacities, however persistent and ineradicable they prove in human thought. By contrast, religion, with respect to both the cognitive representations and the inferential processes it engages, depends overwhelmingly on such maturationally natural cognitive systems. Religious representations reliably involve only minor variations on the conceptions that maturationally natural knowledge offers, which renders those representations attention grabbing, memorable, and easy to deploy. Such a comparison of the cognitive foundations of science and religion points to many startling consequences.

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