

A PARALLEL STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF ISAAC NEWTON, ALBERT EINSTEIN AND STEPHEN HAWKING ON EXISTENCE OF GOD

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ABSTRACT

From time immemorial, the study of the existence of God has fascinated most of mankind. Religious views often led to debates. The present study was conducted based on the views of three greatest physicists, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking on the existence of God. Isaac Newton perceived Monotheistic God as the Masterful Creator. Albert Einstein preferred himself to be called agnostic who believed in pantheistic God where as Stephen Hawking who was an atheist denied fact of any such existence of God. He, rather, claimed the laws of Science to be called God. The present Study focuses on the influences that shaped their views.

INTRODUCTION

Over centuries, existence of God has fascinated the human the most. God has been showcased as omnipotent and omnipresent, having an eternal existence. These traits often project “God” as incorporeal. We find that at least 4 out of 5 people are associated with some religion or follow certain beliefs. Around 7% of the world population is irreligious that means they don’t believe in existence of God or have differences of opinion regarding religion. The present study compares the views of three greatest physicist on the existence of God and what shaped their views on God. They belong to different time period and they came from different childhood.

Isaac Newton believes in monotheistic God and saw Him as the masterful creator whose existence could not be denied in the face of the grandeur of all creations.

Albert Einstein preferred to call himself Agnostic who believes in God but not in Religion. In an interview in 1930 for a book “**Glimpses of the Great**” (1930) by George Sylvester Viereck, he stated “I am not an atheist. I don’t know if I can define myself as a pantheist”. He supported Spinoza’s God “I believe in Spinoza’s God who reveals himself in harmony of all that exists, not in God who concerns himself with fate and doings of mankind”.

Stephen Hawking in his final book “Brief Answers to Big questions” (Published in Bantam books) stated “I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing according to the Laws of Science”. He wrote “ Science has a more compelling explanation than a divine creator and there was no time before the big bang that means no possibilities of a creator.”

The factors associated with the variation of belief by three greatest physicists should be studied. Keeping the above notes in mind the present study is aimed to find the factors that influenced their beliefs.

THEORY

On the basis of religion we can classify God into two forms- Transcendence and Immanence. Transcendence proclaims that “ God is not accessible to us” whereas Immanence means “ God would be accessible through ways shapes or forms”.

Immanence can further classified into Monotheistic, Pantheistic and Pane theistic. Monotheistic are those whose belief is associated with one God. They believe in the existence of one supreme God who created the universe.

Pantheistic are those who belief God exist in all natural things. Their focus is not to recognize an identical God. Pantheistic belief is that the divine extends beyond space and time. Atheism and Agnosticism are two theories which question the very existence of God.

Agnostics view the existence of God as unknown or unpredictable. Atheism, on the other hand, provides a clear image about those who don't believe or reflect any belief regarding the existence of God. The above mentioned facts provide a brief about various aspects which helped to follow up the study.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study was conducted on the factors that influenced the views of these three Physicists. The factors taken are Early Life and Schooling, Educational Background, interest and social movements during their time period. The factors were chosen after studying their life history. Their reviews have been taken as detailed in the chart given below:

Factors Physicists	Isaac Newton	Albert Einstein	Stephen Hawking
Time Period	4 January 1643 – 31 March 1727	14 March 1879 – 18 April 1955	8 January 1942 – 14 March 2018
Social Movements	Age of Enlightenment	Industrial Revolution	Modernization
Early Life and Schooling	1) Raised by his maternal Grandmother. His Uncle a rector was also involved. 2) Read Bible out of self interest.	1) Raised by a secular family, lost faith in the age of 12 during schooling. 2) Considered the stories of Bible as not true.	1) Raised by an intellect family. 2) Considers Bible as mythical.

Isaac Newton

Isaac Newton a theologian -physicist, strongly supported the existence of god, but he always believed in the idea of monotheistic god. Monotheistic thought projected God as the supreme and creator.

He was born into a wealthy family who believed in Christian orthodox values. After the death of his father, his mother married and went to live with her new husband who was a rector, leaving Isaac under the care of his maternal grandmother. Isaac's uncle who was serving as the rector involved himself in taking care of the young boy.

The Age of Enlightenment which came in Europe in 17th Century and lingered till 19th century gave birth to many Intellectuals and Philosophers. Isaac Newton who was born in this period saw god as the masterful creator. In his book "Opticks" he presented an argument to reject Leibniz's theory that it is not necessary for God to intervene.

Newton wrote Further in query 3 of Opticks he added- "For while comets move in very eccentric orbs in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way in orbs concentric, some inconsiderable irregularities excepted which may have arisen from the mutual actions of comets and planets on one another, and which will be apt to increase, till this system wants a reformation."

This comment was largely regarded as a counter to Leibniz's theory that "God would make a perfect world which does not require any intervention from the creator". His views were considered to be associated with Christianity. Several Biographers tagged him as "one who is influenced by Christianity", but he voiced and invoked God as necessary to keep planets in Orbits.

"This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being. And if the fixed stars are the centers of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One."

From early days he was keen to know about natural sciences. His mathematical findings in Principia Mathematica can be related with his occult studies. He attempted to reveal information related to science from Bible and predicted end of the world after 2060. He considered Bible was God's word and he considered Jesus as Divine not as God. He believed,

"It is the perfection of all God's works that they are done with the greatest simplicity ... And therefore, as they that would understand the frame of the world must endeavor to reduce their knowledge to all possible simplicity, so it must be in seeking to understand these visions."

Reflection of Cartesian dualism might have influenced Newton's views on religion, this belief being carried out by Henry More. Isaac Newton thus continued to propagate God as the Creator of the universe.

“This most beautiful system of the sun, [...]

This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont, to be called Lord God or Universal Ruler.”

Albert Einstein

Born 152 years after Newton's death, he is regarded as one of the greatest scientists who gave us $E=MC^2$. Albert Einstein believed in Pantheistic God, the idea coined by Baruch Spinoza, popularly known as Spinoza's God in which Spinoza presented that All the Substance present in the universe is the part of God- “The Sum of all the Physical and Natural Laws”. He stated “My views are near those of Spinoza: admiration for the beauty of and belief in the logical simplicity of the order which we can grasp humbly and only imperfectly. I believe that we have to content ourselves with our imperfect knowledge and understanding and treat values and moral obligations as a purely human problem—the most important of all human problems.”

Albert Einstein never trusted personal God, rather in his The Notes for Autobiography he gave a picture of his childhood:

“I came- though the child of entirely irreligious parents—to a deep religiousness, which, however, reached an abrupt end at the age of twelve. Through the reading of popular scientific books I soon reached the conviction that much in the stories of the Bible could not be true. The consequence was a positively fanatic orgy of freethinking coupled with the impression that youth is intentionally being deceived by the state through lies; it was a crushing impression. Mistrust of every kind of authority grew out of this experience, a skeptical attitude toward the convictions that were alive in any specific social environment an attitude that has never again left me, even though, later on, it has been tempered by a better insight into the causal connections.”

He lost trust in personal god and in **Letters in 1947 and 1952** he wrote,

“It seems to me that the idea of a personal God is an anthropological concept which I cannot take seriously. The idea of a personal God is quite alien to me and seems even naive.”

In support to his pantheistic views, he told George Sylvester Viereck,

“Your question is the most difficult in the world. It is not a question I can answer simply with yes or no. I am not an Atheist. I do not know if I can define myself as a Pantheist. The problem involved is too vast for our limited minds. May I not reply with a parable? The human mind, no matter how highly trained, cannot grasp the universe. We are in the position of a little child, entering a huge library whose walls are covered to the ceiling with books in many different tongues.

The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books, a mysterious order, which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of the human mind, even the greatest and most cultured, toward God. We see a universe marvelously arranged, obeying certain laws, but we understand the laws only dimly. Our limited minds cannot grasp the mysterious force that sways the constellations. I am fascinated by Spinoza's Pantheism. I admire even more his contributions to modern thought. Spinoza is the greatest of modern philosophers, because he is the first philosopher who deals with the soul and the body as one, not as two separate things.”

Around 1930, he explored the idea of Spinoza’s God and in an interview, he explained that he didn’t believe in Afterlife and personified Buddha and Spinoza as religious man head. During early days Einstein’s family was irreligious. Industrial revolution swept across Europe. He stated, “Jesus never told he was God” He even rejected Bible’s stories and he told William Hermanns that he observes the Law of Nature. Though there is a 150 year time gap between the two physicists, both of their ideas were quiet advanced. Einstein added “some centuries ago I would have been burned or hanged. Nonetheless, I would have been in good company.” These thoughts give us a view of his ideas. For Einstein, "science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.

Stephen Hawking’s and Einstein’s period overlapped for a time Being of 13 years. Stephen Hawking Born in the year 1942 and Albert Einstein Died on 1955 Hawking’s family was somewhat eccentric. His career revolved around Physical Cosmology and was entirely in the

field of research. Hawking declared in one narrative event “We are each free to believe what we want and it is my view that the simplest explanation is there is no God. No one created the universe and no one directs our fate. This leads me to a profound realization. There is probably no heaven, and no afterlife either. We have this one life to appreciate the grand design of the universe, and for that, I am extremely grateful.” He projected laws of Science as God.

He claimed that there are no possibilities of creator because there is no time for a creator to exist as there was no time before Big Bang. He expressed it is a natural process. Collapsed stars are so dense that nothing can escape and he explained that most of the theories begin with quantum mechanics. His big bang theory was “exploding suddenly out of a dense singular small atom” and the creator has no role in it.

His career evolved around Big bang which focused on the creation of universe. His extended career can be the main reason behind his belief. Advancement of technology and flexible religious system that grew in Europe provided him a chance for his development which were at limit at the time of Newton. Stephen Hawking voiced as atheist "There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, [and] science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win because it works.”

CONCLUSION

The time gap between them alongside the advancement of the technology and flexible religious system created an impact on them. One cannot compare religious freedom that Stephen Hawking enjoyed with that of Isaac Newton. Galileo Galilei, though he was catholic, presented a relationship between faith and science and argued that both should be separate.

Albert Einstein who believed in Universal God has a quite different view from Isaac Newton where as Stephen Hawking denied any such existence. This study focused on the religious views and compared the views of three physicists. Their early days and time period had great impact on their views. During Stephen Hawking’s time period, one can have different opinion as religious flexibility was in vogue, which was not there during Isaac Newton’s days. Age of Enlightenment has a great impact of Isaac Newton whereas Advancement of Technology during Industrial Revolution gave Albert Einstein a new perspective. The recent technology

upgradation laid the foundation for Stephen Hawking's belief. This Study hence compares the ideas of each of them.

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