Science And Religion: Enemies Or Teammates?

by Elaine Rosenberger
Are science and religion in opposition? What do biology and neuroscience reveal about the human soul? Is there empirical evidence for the existence of God? Explore these and other issues when Michael Miller, Ph.D. from the Laura and Alvin Siegal Lifelong Learning Program at Case Western Reserve University brings the series “Religion and Science” to Lakewood Public Library beginning on Thursday, February 5 at 7 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium.

Held on Thursdays in February, the four-part series will explore the tension between science and religion in “A Fundamental Opposition?” on February 5th. The series continues with “God’s Existence: Arguments For and Against” on February 12th, “The Intelligent Design Controversy” on February 19th, and “Science and the Soul” on February 26th.

Michael Miller received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Ohio State University and is particularly interested in the philosophy of language. Before the series begins, he takes the time to answer a few questions:

LPL: Did you always want to study philosophy?
MM: I have always been fascinated by philosophical questions. I grew up obsessed with sci-fi and fantasy books, films, and video games, many of which explored philosophical themes—for example the nature of personhood or the question of whether we can know what reality is really like. When I enrolled in my first philosophy class, I was a sophomore and an English major. By the end of the semester, I had changed my major to philosophy. Upon graduation, the inertia of my intellectual curiosity compelled me to pursue a Ph.D.

LPL: How does your interest in language inform your interest in science and religion?
MM: One of the things I’ll be discussing in the February series is the question of whether science and religion stand in some kind of fundamental opposition to one another. One interesting way to approach this issue is by comparing and contrasting religious discourse with scientific discourse. Do religious assertions purport to describe truths about the world in the same sense that scientific assertions do? Traditional theology presupposes an affirmative answer, and this implies that when religious doctrine and scientific theory give incompatible explanations of the same phenomenon, at most one of them can be right. On the other hand, perhaps the conflict is merely apparent because religious discourse is not actually in the same business as scientific discourse at all. Maybe religious assertions (e.g., “God exists”) don’t really describe the world but rather do something else like express our feelings, promote communal solidarity, or help us to cope emotionally with the world. I leave it as an exercise for the faithful to contemplate whether such an explanation of religious discourse, if accepted, would be compatible with a genuine commitment to them.

LPL: Tell us a little about the Laura and Alvin Siegal Lifelong Learning Program at Case Western Reserve University.
MM: It is a fantastic community resource for continuing education in northeast Ohio, offering a wide variety of high-quality courses, lectures, workshops, and educational travel opportunities. For the latest information about upcoming programming, visit www.cwru.edu/lifelonglearning.

LPL: What do you hope program participants take away from this series?
MM: We will cover some classic philosophical themes, questions, and arguments on a topic that every reflective person comes to wonder about at some point. Participants will come away with a sharper set of tools and concepts for thinking critically not only about their own personal beliefs, but also about the place of religion and science, respectively, in human life more generally.

The Library’s Religion and Science series is co-sponsored by the Laura & Alvin Siegal Lifelong Learning Program of Case Western Reserve University, which seeks to provide connections between the academic world and the general community. Admission to the series is free and open to all. No registration is required. For more information, visit www.lakewoodpubliclibrary.org/more.

Lakewood Public Library

Faith, Family And The Search For Truth: Authors At The Library

by Genevieve Jaskulski
Faith, belief, religion and discipline; there are those who would say if you were looking for the meaning behind our existence you need look no farther than these four words. There are even some who would go so far as to devote their lives to the manifestation of those concepts, and the culmination of the ideals behind each one.

On Thursday, January 22nd at 7 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium, meet the author who will invite you to follow his own personal journey to find his calling. David Pfriem is an eighteen year old traveling to New York, with the intention of taking his vows and beginning his life as a monk. Pfriem’s book, “Uncommon Bonds,” is set in Cleveland in 1961 and gives the reader much to think about as it delves into the life of young David, explaining his passions and the experiences that lead to the choice of living a life of ultimate servitude. It is a story that will keep you on the edge of your seat and have you wondering if he will truly end up taking the plunge. We hope you will join the Author as he talks about his book, and signs copies that will be available for purchase at the end of his presentation.

The following Sunday, we will be playing host for an equally compelling author, whom has had her work published in magazines such as The Chicago Reader, Greek Magazine, Outside Magazine, Gnome Magazine and Hyper text magazine. On Sunday January 25th at 6 p.m. in the Main Library Auditorium we will be featuring Elizabeth Earley, the author of, “A Map of Everything.” Sometimes we happen upon stories which will leave a beautiful impression on us, humans doing the unthinkable, surviving the unimaginable and conquering even themselves when they prove to be their own biggest obstacle. Earley produces just such a story for her. Born with this tragedy. Earley has had a passion for writing since the early age of ten, and even at such an young age had an unorthodox way of transcending her youth by spending her recesses reciting aloud some of her written prose to anyone willing to listen. Elizabeth will be joined by the poets Dasha Kelly and William Evans who are both featured on the accompanying soundtrack to the book, “A Map of Everything.” If you have any further questions about these two authors, or our other programs please visit our website at lakewoodpubliclibrary.org.

Lakewood Observer Volume 11, Issue 2
Page 7
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