How do you understand the relationships(s) between science and your religious or secular tradition? Fr. Thomas Weinandy, OFM, Cap., Ph.D., Roman Catholic

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From a Catholic perspective, we've always felt that science and religion should be compatible. And the reason that we feel and think and believe that religion and science are compatible because ultimately God's the source of all truth. That He is responsible for whatever truth we find in nature and if He reveals to something that it goes beyond nature, we can know that as well. But they cannot conflict or contradict one another because if all that is ultimately comes from God, then what we learn from science and history or whatever and what we learn from religion should be compatible. They're are different topics, they're are different subjects, what they're teaching us is different, but yet since it's true that there is no contradiction between them. And actually because from a Christian's perspective, God has given us intelligence and a mind, He wants us to know the truth of science. (01:29) So there's a positive thrust and that's why the Vatican has its astronomy things and has conferences on science and technology to promote science. So while in past history there has been conflicts that everybody knows about, ultimately there should be no conflict, but there should be a positive inter-working between the two of them. I feel personally that I'm a Franciscan and St. Francis, I think a lot of people know had a great love for nature. He felt that to look at nature, to study nature was not just to learn about nature, but also that nature itself was a sign of God's presence. And so all the things that science does to show us the beauty, the intricacy we find in the world around us, in the cosmos and all of those kinds of things actually help us draw closer to God. And so from a Catholic perspective, from my perspective as a Franciscan, there's a great compatibility between what we can come to know by our natural reason by use of science and what God may reveal to us that would not be a purview of science, but not contradict science. (02:58) We know that from a Christian-Catholic again perspective that human beings from the
Bible that tells us that we were created in the image and likeness of God, it might seem that because we're created in the image and likeness of God, that that would be incompatible with evolution or the natural origins of human beings. But again, Christianity, Catholicism feels that there can be a positive relationship between what evolution teaches us, what we find within evolution and what we believe as Catholics and Christians as well. And so when we look at the evolutionary kind of chain that the human being evolved for the past, being able to walk upright, having a larger brain, if that's what we find in paleontology and all the things we do in anthropology, well the church would have no argument against that. If that's what it is, that's the way it is. (04:10) The one thing that the Catholic church would also want to say though, is that in the evolution of human beings while the physical evolution of human beings could have taken over millions and millions of years, when the point came when Homosapiens came into existence, that something radically new happened. And the reason we want to say that is because the Catholic church wants to say, yes, human beings are animals, we're part of the material world from which everything evolved, but we also believe that human beings have intelligence and free will. And that these make us unique from everything else in creation and the world around us. And that because we are intelligent and because we have free will, that these could not just have evolved from matter, that there needs to be a cause that is beyond just material cause because we have something now that in a sense of spiritual. Being able to think and know the truth, being able to be free and make moral choices. That these are not just kind of materialistic things we're doing, we're doing something more. (05:26)

Traditionally then, we say that human beings are composed of a body and soul. And the soul is the ability to do things and the ability to have free will. And so the Catholic church would wanna say at the moment when we went from being simply an animal to being Homosapiens, an intelligent, rational animal that God had to intervene, that He had to give us what was needed to bring us over the hump from being just an animal to being a human being. Pope John Paul The Two says that it's an ontological leap, that there's an ontological leap at the moment
human beings came into existence. So we exist in a different kind of way than say the other animals or the other things in the world around us. So we want to keep special that human beings are unique and that they're different from everything else, not just in degree, but in kind. But we would hold that for what our science tells us or evolution tells us about how the material parts of us evolved over the millions of years, we could accept that without any trouble. (06:46) In one sense, we want to say we're part of the real world in which we live. That you're the animals, the plants, everything, we're part of this real world, but at the same time, we're part of it in a different kind of way than they are. (07:12) Let me first talk about the challenges that are between science and religion or where Catholics would see challenges. I think, first of all, the Catholic church itself and its theologians need to have a great reverence to what science is doing. I think sometimes people hold science at arms length and that's not a good attitude at all. I think the church always has to be sure that they take seriously what scientists say and not just pass it off as unverified theory or a hypothesis. On the other hand, I think scientists and science community needs to have a greater respect for religion. That the two are not incompatible, but rather they work together. The truth that they share is all again, from the same source and that when you come up with scientists who want us to answer all the questions from materialism, deterministic materialism, well then the church would say, you're no longer dealing in science, you're dealing in philosophy and that you can't actually explain all the things that need to be explained purely from science. (08:44) And that there's other ways of obtaining knowledge through philosophy or through again, if God reveals things to us, we can note things of that nature as well. So I think the challenge is that we take one another seriously and not try to poo poo either the science or the religion. To consider religion just a superstition, I think is doing a disservice to the human beings who actually believe in something. And I think for the people who are religious, who say, "Well science is just atheistic." Well that's ridiculous too. That what scientists are doing is very important for our world and our knowledge and for the good of the whole human community. When it comes to opportunities, in one sense
I kind of stated that already, I think the great opportunities is that for a greater respect for one another and the various fields of learning and knowledge, that the scientists should have a respect for religious truth and that those who are religious Christians and Catholics should have a great respect for the scientists. (10:02) And I think there needs to be more dialogue and a common coming together rather than sort of having all this adversarial kinds of attitudes. It would be good if scientists would try to show how science and religion is compatible and theologians showing the same thing. And I think that's happening more now than ever, but I think that's the great thing, that those are the great opportunities, because science has done so much good for the world and I think religion has also done a great deal for the world. And I think Christianity and Catholicism have always strived to do what is best for the people with whom we share this planet and this world.

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