Yunjung Kim

Adriana Campoy

English 131A

20 February 2014

Proposal: Newton's Search for Truth

Classical mechanics greatly involve the three laws of motion set by Isaac Newton. His findings provide such a crucial fundamental basis to classical mechanics that it is also well known as Newtonian mechanics. Aside from his immense contribution to physics, Newton also played a pivotal role to mathematics and optics, inventing infinitesimal calculus and building the first reflecting telescope. When people think of Isaac Newton, the image of the falling apple or the three laws of motion come to mind. People rarely are aware of his underlying motives for his search for truth. Science and religion represent contrasting ideologies and remain separate, and Newton's identity as a theological heretic is masked. To clarify and investigate the root of the misconceptions, the paper poses the following questions: Why and how has Newton's identity been skewed and misrepresented throughout history? Does theology present a crucial part of his identity or has it rightfully been neglected? What are the consequences of these false views?

In primary and secondary educations, schools aim to educate students on a variety of topics, thus some ideas may be overlooked and only key ideas may be emphasized. Therefore, classes may only focus on Newton's major contribution to sciences; it undermines his religious influences. In addition to the lack of awareness, society's reluctance to relate science and religion also prevent people from accepting Newton's theological motives. From analysis of collection of Newton's correspondences and journals, the importance of religion in Newton's work is apparent; theology is an important part of his scientific discoveries.

Some may question how the disregard of religion is detrimental to society. Lack of knowledge of his theological influence does not affect one's ability to understand physics or complete mathematical computations. However, it does hinder people from understanding Newton's brilliance. To those who seek to comprehend how or why Newton was able to make the many discoveries, the ignorance to his religion would prevent them from correctly determining the cause and motive. This would result in false conceptions of how genius such as Newton's came to be. People fail to realize the possibility that strong reasons such as religious ones are necessary for large discoveries. It also leads to acceptance of the false fact that Newton's work made religion unnecessary, which is opposite of Newton's true idea. The prevalent narrow view of sciences and religion, restraining people to consider them as one topic, would be loosened if people knew of Newton's connections. Rather than having to pick one or the other, a range of possibilities open once we are able to relate science and religion.

Claims that Newton's background is not important may be made. Though it is true that one can understand his ideas without knowledge of his theological influence, it is crucial to avoid reaching false conclusions (i.e. Newton's work created a 'clockwork' universe that removed the need of God). Also, since Newton was not very public about religion and most of his published texts include only few or even no religious references or connections, counterarguments that theology did not heavily influence his work may be made. However, correspondences and private journals make it apparent that it did have an impact on his scientific discoveries.

In order to logically follow the claims made in the paper, premises are stated. Initially, the assumption that Newton's theology is not well known is made. However, this can be properly justified with references to how textbooks neglect such information and solely teach the discoveries. Therefore, without further research on Newton, the general public or student would not know of Newton's religious influences. Another assumption that people hesitate to relate science and religion is made. This can be supported with evidence from the evolution and creation debate. Controversial topics such as these prevent people from thinking of sciences and religion in the same plane. For either topics, additional measures, such as taking surveys, could be made to confirm that the general public is not aware of this identity of Newton and that they oppose the combination of science and religion.

Various sources will be used to support the claims and arguments of this paper. Article by Kate Ravilious titled *Isaac Newton: Who He Was, Why Google Apples Are Falling* depicts the public view of Newton, which omits religion. It also helps argue the central claim his large contribution to sciences covers the religious influences in his work. The inclusion of religion many in-depth biographies such as BBC's documentary and *Isaac Newton and the Scientific Revolution* by Gale E. Christianson from the series Oxford Portraits in Science verifies the existence and importance of religion in Newton's life. Through analysis of the scholarly review article of the *Principia Mathematica* by Stephen Snobelen, claims that theology truly influences Newton's work is supported. Alfred Rupert Hall's compilation of biographies in *Isaac Newton: Eighteenth Century Persepective* help develop possible root source of the skewed representation of Newton toward sciences.

The paper will begin with a summary of Newton's biography (including both sciences and religion) to set the context. An outline of the argument, incorporating the questions and hypothesis along with the claim, will follow to guide the readers in the logic of the paper. The paper will initially address and briefly justify the warrants necessary for the argument to be true. It will proceed to argue minor or major claims, recognizing the counter arguments along the way. Stakes will be included towards the end.