

IS SCIENCE RELEVANT TO THEOLOGY?

I. Positions for Relevance:

1. Direct Relevance. Science and theology confront one another on the questions of facticity.
 - 1.1 A set of scientific statements bears directly on a theological doctrine if that doctrine or its negation can be inferred from those scientific statements. For example archaeological evidence may support or refute biblical or theological statements such as the falling of the walls of Jerico.
 - 1.2 This would not hold if:
 - a) the doctrine is not a theological statement, or
 - b) the doctrine (or its negation) is not directly inferable from science (in this case theological issues are not related to science).
 - 1.3 The traditional Catholic position, and that of some fundamentalists is that theology is not directly refutable by science.
2. Quasi-Direct Relevance. Science and theology confront one another on their interpretations of the same data.
 - 2.1 This approach sees science and theology at times giving alternative and apparently competing explanations of the same data. For example, Darwin and Hally gave different accounts of creation data. Carles Towns sees physics and religion as competing explanations of deep level reality.
 - 2.2 To negate this position of quasi-direct relevance would would have to show that
 - a) science is not in the business of offering explanations, or
 - b) theology is not in the business of offering explanations, or
 - c) both of the above, or
 - d) that theology and science deal with different kinds of questions, and therefore one can expect their answers to be different while not therefore in direct conflict with one another.
3. Indirect Relevance. Science and theology relate to each other only indirectly on the following one or more levels:
 - 3.1 Metaphysical levels: Science and theology confront each other only on the metaphysical level.
 - a) for example, Darwin introduced the metaphysics of evolution, Newton that of the universe as a clock, and Whitehead of process.

To negate this position one would have to:

 - a) deny metaphysics
 - b) deny that there is any good reason for formulating theories in terms of a particular metaphysical scheme for consistency sake.

- 3.2 Methodological Relevance: Some use the same methodology for science and for biblical studies. Some of the basic methods used are:
- a) model building. Eg. Raven and Barber use models in both science and theology. The specific models may be the same or different, but are models.
 - b) problem solving.
 - c) linguistic analysis. Here the question might be to find a common epistemology. Eg. F.S.C. Northrop.
- 3.3 Heuristic Influence: Look for analogies, examples, metaphores. E.G. a comparison of incarnation and quantum wave-particle duality.

To negate this position one would have to show:

- a) arguments against direct or quasi-direct relevance.
- b) show that suggestions from science are misleading (the problem here is judging the comparison by the roots, not the fruits).

II. Positions against Relevance:

1. Instrumentalist arguments: Science and theology do not overlap for they are not doing the same things. They provide different forms of explanation.

Theologians -often argue that science is instrumental.

- 1.1 Science: Science is a tool and religion is truth.
 - theories are useful calculation devices for accurate predictions, organizing guides for directing experimentation, or practical tools for achieving technical control
 - Science is not a statement of truth, but a calculating device.
 - Science is not a statement about why it is so.
 - This was the defense a Lutheran pastor used in introducing Copernicus' theory of the world.
 - One problem with unstrumentalism is that there is no way to deal with contradictory models. See Barbor.
- 1.2 Religion: Scientists often argue that religion is instruamental. Religion = tool, and science = truth.
 - Religious belief is not belief in a proposition, but an intention to behave in a certain way, a moral belief, together with stories that entertain the minds of the believers. (Braithwaite)
 - No direct or quasi-direct relevance, but psychological significance.
 - using the same methodology and heruistics is not ruled out.

III. "Two Realms" Argument:

1. Ontological dualism: The entities comprising reality are divided into separate classes: science deals with one, theology with the other (the wholely other). Eg. Calif. argument of evolution vs creation in text books. Problems: a) dividing the domains, b) leads to God of gaps.
2. Epistomological dualism: Separate, distinct ways of knowing.

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is complementary & confrontational

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