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Paper 1

One Natural World, Two Visions

Faith is integrated into the everyday practice of science when religious concerns are used to try and impact how science is taught and practiced. It is also involved in the primary stages of postulations of scientific discovery. Conversely, science is related to religion when involved in the reasoning of extreme unrealistic happenings. Grinnell also uses a bicycle metaphor in order to explain his idea of a complementary relationship between science and religion.

The relationship between faith and science has been argued endlessly, beginning with the debate between teaching evolutionary theories against creationism. The Catholic Church has battled to involve religious creation theories into scientific studies, but was ruled by the United States courts as “a violation of church and state” (Everyday Practice of Science, p. 160). This argument stems from the thought of how things came to be. Like most arguments between religion and science, a question is brought up that can be answered from a scientific viewpoint as well as a religious standpoint.

It is also important to examine the aspects of faith within the first steps of science. It is argumentative that assumptions that lead to scientific discoveries began with faith that there would be a result. A scientist may have an inexplicable inclination to continuously try an experiment that has failed to produce any positive results. A non-religious person would easily observe that the scientist’s feelings towards the experiment exerted a certain drive to keep going, a certain passion. The faithful person would argue that passion is a distinctive characteristic of a *believer*. The scientist *believed* that something beneficial would come from perseverance and patience. Grinnell came to the conclusion that faith is a required aspect of science. He stated that faith was needed in order to understand the patterns and structures of the natural world; he referred to this as “intelligible design, in contrast to intelligent design” (Everyday Practice of Science, p. 168).

Science becomes involved in religion when science is used as reasoning for any event or situation that God is meant to be responsible for. Debates arise when examining explanations of “the way things are” (Everyday Practice of Science, p. 161); Grinnell uses the example of the sun to illustrate this meaning. Galileo supported Copernicus’s idea that the earth and fellow planets revolved around the sun. This countered Aristotle’s claim that the earth did not move and that the sun did. A literal interpretation of the bible led the Catholic Church to concur with Aristotle’s theory. This situation involved a religion to choose a position on a scientific concept related to religious text; this is a correlation known as complementarity.

When Grinnell states that he sees science and religion in a relation called complementarity, he means that although science and religion are separate subjects, they remain interactive ideas. He states that “there is only one world [but] the world can be experienced in different ways” (Everyday Practice of Science, p. 177). Each individual has a certain outlook on the way that he or she views the world. Some may hold a religious standpoint and be determined that faith is the centerfold, others may look at everything and use mathematical reasoning to calculate statistics or probability of life, while even others see the world from a scientific view as one large Petri dish. Each vision is different and unique, but never oblivious to the others. In fact, the subjects overlap and complement each other in everyday science; the hardest part is noticing and realizing when that happens.

To explain the concept of complementarity, Grinnell uses the example of a bicycle. He states that “having a bike makes riding possible [but] other factors influence the direction in which the rider will go” (Everyday Practice of Science, p. 177). In the metaphor, the bicycle represents the scientific technology that we encounter in our everyday lives. Faith is expressed through the reasoning of where to go on the bicycle. This is a clear example of how science and religion interact in simple actions of life. The two viewpoints show complementarity because of how they complement each other within one function. There would be no point to having a bicycle if there was no reason of destination. Therefore without having the religious values of deciding what should be done, the values of the technological science would serve no purpose.

Grinnell’s view seems to be a reasonable way to interact the scientific and religious aspects of human thought. He gives numerous examples to support his claims and provides many sources for further reference. However, I think that he dappled in dangerous territory when involving philosophical explanation into the text. Philosophy can be an ambiguous subject with illogical reasoning for proofs. I feel that Grinnell would have a stronger argument if he replaced philosopher’s theories with those of fellow scientists and others who share his common thread of thought. This could help relate to the topic at hand, revolving around science in religion and faith in science.

Source:

Grinnell, Frederick. *Everyday Practice of Science: Where Intuition and Passion Meet Objectivity and Logic*. Oxford University Press. 2009.