

SCIENCE AND RELIGION GRADED PAPER 2

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The thesis and arguments

Your thesis is stated with reasonable clarity, but it could be better. I expected you to ls betwe parallels between politcs and synthesis, and you did address that question, but not that question alone. The real heart of your paper seems to be the claim that good syntheses will die for lack of support from one of the poles in the science-and-religion argument. The failure of this paper is in the lack of persuasion that Gosse's synthesis was, in fact, a good synthesis.

See points (5) and (8) below. You overstate the role of logic in evaluating the quality of an argument or proof. It is necessary, but it is **not sufficient**. Moreover, your parallel with politics gets weak when you compare Debs and Gosse: you show no evidence of anything other than reasonable rejections of Gosse's conjecture.

You had an interesting point with which to work, and you develop some parts of it well, but the difficult elements of your argument were unconvincing.

The writing

You write well, but too frequently, you divide portions of a sentence to interject supporting phrases, leaving the final sentence difficult to parse. Simplify.

You exceeded the 4-page limit.

Items marked on the paper

(1) At what point has the influence of science waned? It has never fully dominated, and in some locations it remains distinctly the weaker of the two, but can you specify one instance where science's influence substantially diminished? The pendulum-like oscillations in American politics is, in this regard, quite different from the slow but consistent trend of science's wax to religion's wane over long periods of time.

(2) Avoid such meaningless and unjustified phrases. You must first establish that theologians and scientists both failed to understand and also feared Gosse's work; only then can you assert that the fear caused them to reject the work. You may not simply assert such a claim without support.

(3) Not to oversimplify conservatism, but fisscal conseratives do **not** seek governmental support for businesses. They want neither support nor regulation of business—they seek non-interference.

(4) I was awaiting the punchline that would substantively correlate Gosse and Debs. I just hit it, and it's a dud. For Debs, Congress passed a new law etigned to target him (and others like him), and then he was imprisoned. In what way is that similar to Gosse's treatment, where his opponents

argued against his position and then ignored him (that is, moved on)? I see no meaningful analogy at all. Even if you specify the ts of the incorrect elements of the arguments against Gosse, his situation was **nothing** like Debs'.

(5) You fail to predict and answer the questions of a skeptical reader. You choose, **without support**, a reason for the scientific rejection of Gosse that fits your argument. What about other possible reasons? How about this objection: Gosse's hypothesis is an unscientific one because it cannot be empirically evaluated, so there can be no scientific stance on its validity. For the philosopher, if Gosse's hypothesis were true, then science is exploring, in depth, God's deception. This hypothesis would not be the first time that someone claimed that sensory observations may be unreliable. The simple answer, for the scientist is that we take the validity of observation as an axiom, and see where we can go from there. Gosse introduces no new twist on this concern about empiricism, so there's not much for scientists to say.

In the end, you present no evidence that Gosse's conjecture was opposed on anything but rational grounds. You prepare the reader for a conspiracy of the two-part majority, but it doesn't appear.

(6) But is that somehow *wrong*? What do you mean that he *only* succeeded because of support from the base? Darwin's theory was properly scientific, and he presented evidence to support it. Why wouldn't the scientific base support it?

(7) Now that sounds like an interesting observation, except that it's tautological. I cannot gain broad support for my ideas (*success*) unless I have broad support for my ideas (*backing of some base*).

(8) Here's where your argument really fails. The parallels between politics and science-vs-religion exist, and you highlight them well with regards to *influence*. However, you've shown one anecdote (Debs), and that hardly justifies the claim that *history has shown* anything. Worse, you've done nothing to evaluate the quality of the ideas in question (Debs' and Gosse's). A skeptic could reasonably assert that Debs' ideas may have been valid, but Gosse's ideas has fundamental flaws that went beyond the mere lack of a base of support. Logical arguments are persuasive only if one has reason to believe the premeases. Gosse provides a logical argument that employs premeases whose truth is both unknown and unknowable, leaving plenty of room for rational rejection. Until you can address that skepticism, this thesis goes nowhere.

Grade: B

Philip Henry Gosse's *Omphalos*: How Gosse's "Third Party Politics" Fails When Up Against the Scientific Community and the Church

The conflict between science and the Roman Catholic Church is analogous to a political race that has been going on for hundreds of years. Various issues have divided these two sides in ^{em-} ~~history~~ ^{dashes} from whether the world is flat, to whether God exists. Through solicited donations from the masses in the pews or from scientific grants, both sides fight to promote their cause. But most importantly, like all political races, the main conflict centers on the battle for influence. Throughout the centuries, ^① the influence of both sides has waxed and waned in a battle with few interruptions or unconventional challengers. This uneventful condition ^{It did?} ended with the publication of Philip Henry Gosse's *Omphalos* in 1857. Gosse's idea, a hybrid explanation using religious and scientific concepts, ^{and} proposed a new, logical interpretation of the origin of the earth. His unorthodox attempt confused both scientists and Catholic theologians, ^{was that likely? or possible?} neither side understood what the ramifications would be if the public embraced and believed the work. In a ^{grammar!} classic example of fearing what one does not understand, the Church and the scientific community both proclaimed that Gosse's theory was invalid and ignored it. Gosse's failure to gain influence indicates the similarities between the struggle of science and the Church and the ^{italics} de facto two-party system of the US government. Science and the Church's oligopoly on the debate of world origins preclude a third-party opinion like Gosse's *Omphalos* from gaining significant influence and also ^{word choice} makes a successful synthesis between science and religion extremely unlikely. ^{OK...}

Both Democrats and Republicans believe in democracy and capitalism. Eugene Debs, a US socialist from the early 20th century and third party presidential candidate, did not. Mr. Debs and his ideas of socialism challenged US capitalism and democracy. It also

Don't change?
Messy.

synthesized liberal *and* conservative ideas to form a new concept of government. Many consider Socialism to be on the far left of the political spectrum because it incorporates many liberal ideas such as the equality of individuals. However, the philosophy also includes conservative ideas like the government supporting businesses instead of taxing them. Debs' socialism synthesis of Democratic and Republican ideas directly compares to Gosse's synthesis. Both scientists and some members of the church believe that the age of the earth can be determined through the study of natural evidence. A recent New York Times article shows this by documenting two expeditions, one of creationists and one of geologists, that rafted through the Grand Canyon. After observing the same visual evidence, the groups came to vastly different conclusions about the canyon's age (Wilgoren 1). Gosse challenged the notion that valid conclusions can even be drawn from natural data and then formed his hypothesis based on a synthesis of science and religion. Both Gosse and Debs challenge one uniformly held belief in order to propose another that combines two opposing mainstream viewpoints.

~~So, Since~~ Debs' ideas unified liberals and conservatives in a logical and feasible way, why did socialism not take hold in the US? ~~As it turned out,~~ Debs suffered the same fate as Gosse. Both ~~D~~emocrats and ~~R~~epublicans feared socialist ideas and not only ignored the concepts behind socialism, but also actively engaged in efforts to suppress them. In a bipartisan congressional effort to curtail any resistance that threatened their control, Congress passed the Espionage Act of 1917. The power of the two-party system prevailed, jailing Debs for violating the act and thus rendering him unable to campaign and effectively champion his cause. Gosse's fate ~~showed remarkable similarities.~~ After participating in some efforts to discredit Gosse by pointing out criticisms of the *Omphalos* hypothesis, the

3

Too informal.

Cite it!

OK

Reference?

was remarkably similar.

(4)

Church and the scientific community largely ignored Gosse's idea (Russell 70). Deb's failure in his crusade for socialism parallels Gosse's and further supports the notion that third parties in politics and in the conflict between science and the Church will not be successful.

Gosse's hypothesis of synthesis clashed with Church thought and scared many theologians who wondered what the ramifications of the idea would be. *Omphalos*, published in 1857, came just two years before the publication of Darwin's revolutionary work, *Origin of the Species*. While Darwin's work, not Gosse's, changed the landscape of the world origin debate, *Omphalos* appeared very threatening to church doctrine at the time. Gosse portrayed God as a trickster, not as the omnipotent, ^{grammar} good-intentioned God the church described. People could wonder the following: if God could create such a lie as purporting millions of years of false world history as truth, could He also be lying about the Ten Commandments or the existence of heaven and hell? Church officials thought this logic could be catastrophic for Christians to hear. Therefore, they took the only prudent approach and declared Gosse's assertions in *Omphalos* to be false.

↳ So are their objections ignorant fear-mongering, or are they just theologically wise?

The scientific community also rejected Gosse's claims, but for different reasons.

Omphalos proposed that the careers of certain scientists, especially geologists and other natural scientists, had been spent not finding truth, but uncovering God's lies. For other scientists, Gosse's theory didn't directly affect their line of work; however, It did? Or it would have? it caused the general field of science to be less respected. If the public thought that natural scientists had been wrong for hundreds of years, they could think the same about chemists or physicists or others. Future discoveries could be taken less seriously and scientists would lose influence on society and for this reason, scientists almost completely disregarded Gosse's hypothesis.

Chemists & physicists are natural scientists.

(5)

Like what?

Mr. Gosse's hypothesis seemed to have all the right ingredients for success, yet it still failed. The assertion had a complete and logical explanation and according to Russell, "There Right: It was unfalsifiable \Rightarrow non-scientific. [was] no logical possibility of proving that [the] theory [was] untrue." The theory would have

resolved a debate that had been going on for centuries. The work was very timely also, for ~~it came at a time when~~ people were ready to accept new ideas as they did Darwin's two years later.

Thus one might wonder: if Gosse's synthesis failed, how could one succeed? ~~While no one~~ Synthesis?

~~knows for sure, it~~ is very unlikely that such a theory could gain mainstream public influence because of the nature of the topic it addresses. The origin of humans, a fundamental topic, has

polarized much of society, leaving little room for middle ground. Theologians listen to ideas of other theologians, and scientists listen to hypotheses of other scientists; hypotheses synthesizing

assertion, not argument. Where is your support? these two beliefs alienate those at the religious and scientific bases and thus will not be respected

and adapted. Darwin's theory of evolution succeeded only because he had much of the scientific (6)

base rallying behind him, something Gosse never had. In politics, a candidate cannot have much

success unless the party base supports him or her. People who advocate ideas of synthesis (7)

inherently lack a base, and without public support, an idea can never gain significant influence in society.

Through examining Philip Gosse's attempt at a hypothesis of synthesis about world origins, it becomes apparent that the church-versus-science debate contains many similarities to a

political race with Gosse being the third party candidate. The race for gaining influence has been going on for hundreds of years and will presumably keep going. As history has shown, third

party candidates rarely succeed not because their ideas are inferior, but because without a base of (8)

influence, the ideas could never fully resonate throughout society. Gosse fits perfectly into this

third party mold. His ideas have logic, but the church and the scientific community discredited

them before they could make an impact. A modern day figure similar to Gosse is renowned scientist and evangelist Christian Francis Collins. Collins has many logical hypotheses that use synthesis and while are unprovable, are also un-falsifiable. However, currently, Collins has no base because his views are at least partially irreconcilable to both sides of the spectrum. As a result, Collins has neither the Church nor the majority of the scientific community to promote his ideas. [Collins does not plan to give up because of this, however. Instead he attempts to tailor his message in a way that would bring the bases closer together and depolarize the debate. Will this work? Gosse, Debs and history would say no, but the answer remains yet to be seen.] The battle for influence is cutthroat, and if the "two political parties" (church and science) continue exerting their polarized influence, Gosse, Debs and Collins' ideas will always be remembered as logical successes, but failures in terms of gaining societal acceptance.

like all science?

That's bad.

X Irrelevant.

Not enough.

Works Cited

Russell, Bertrand. Religion and Science. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Wilgoren, Jodi. "Seeing Creation and Evolution in Grand Canyon." New York Times. 6 October 2005.