

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

General Comments

I'll start with some formatting quibbles. Your 1.5 inch margins are wider than Word's 1.25 inch default size. Professor Kaplan asked for 1 inch margins in the assignment, so I would recommend adhering to that request. I tend to prefer justified margins so that your text is lined up on the right margin as well as the left, which I think makes the paper look more professional. I might also suggest single spacing your title. Of course, the last two comments are merely personal preference.

Your grammar and sentence structure are very good. Your meaning is always apparent, though there are instances in which you could probably clean up your wording a bit to make your sentences tighter. A more important point on conventions is that you need to include citations. Not to do so is considered plagiarism, so I would recommend you heed this particular bit of my advice, whatever else you may choose to disregard.

Your argument itself is strong. I have a few questions about some of the finer points, but on the whole, this is a really well thought out argument and there don't seem to be any significant holes.

The Title

I like this title in that it introduces the overall theme of your paper. However, it is a little unclear that you are equating Gosse's idea with a third party candidate. Perhaps you could change the wording a bit to make this comparison more apparent. As your title currently stands, "up" should be capitalized. The usual convention for "up" as a preposition would be to have it in lowercase, but because it is functioning in the phrase "up against," it should be capitalized in this instance.

The Introduction

Does the conflict only involve the Roman Catholic Church, or is it all of Christianity? White cites a number of examples of the Protestant church vehemently rejecting science so as to "measure up" to the Catholic church. You have a typo in the first line: it should read "is a political race." How would you define a political race other than as a struggle for power? You say that the main conflict is for influence, but I am not sure how else one would see a political race. You describe the parallel way in which religious groups and political parties are divided. I think it's interesting to note that if you look at profiles of each political party (Pew Research has some particularly useful ones) there is a definite correlation between religious and political views; religious conservatives tend to be politically conservative, and those who are more liberal religiously are in general political liberals. Because this jumped out at me when I read your introduction, but I don't think you are intending to make that point at all, you might want to consider rewording this sentence so that it gives a slightly different impression. Also, I am not entirely sure that your discussion of the religious spectrum is even relevant. All beliefs along the spectrum can be found among scientists and among non-scientists. In the next sentence, your verb tense implies that the lack of challenging has continued to the present; this is not what you mean. The beginning of your introduction (through "...unconventional challengers.") is a bit choppy, I think. You jump back and forth between comparing religion to politics, and various

issues that have divided religion and science. Try changing the order of your sentences to make this flow better.

Your next sentence begins with “All this changed,” which suggests that *everything* you present in the first few sentences of your introduction is no longer true. I don’t think this is what you intend. You state that Gosse’s idea was “confusing” to scientists and to “religious theologians” (which is redundant – theologians are religious), and I am not sure confusing is the right word. Later in the paragraph, you write “the similarities between the struggle between science and religion...” There is no grammatical inaccuracy here, but using “between” twice in such a small space is a bit ungainly. I don’t think you need to capitalize “government.” After setting up your argument so thoroughly, your thesis comes across as a bit frivolous. The analogy is amusing, but it puts a humorous slant on what is meant to be a serious argument, and makes your writing seem unprofessional.

The Body

Syntax

- On the second page, you say that Debs’ ideas “were far deviated from...” I am not sure if this is grammatically correct. If it is, it sounds awkward.
- At the bottom of the second page, you have two typos: “if God could creates” and “could He be also be lying.” At the bottom of the third page, you have misspelled “synthesizing.”
- Capitalize “Ten Commandments” at the top of the third page.
- You refer to Gosse’s idea as a hypothesis, and then a theory. Which do you mean? From a scientific perspective, the word “theory” is generally used to mean something that has been proven, to the extent that anything can be proven. A hypothesis is an unproven conjecture about a way that the world might be. I think “hypothesis” therefore would be a better word for Gosse’s idea. At the bottom of the third page, you use the word “theory” twice – do you mean “theory” or “hypothesis”?
- The phrase “a very fundamental topic” is redundant; if the topic is fundamental, it is fundamental, and the modifier is unnecessary.
- You need a comma after the phrase “a very fundamental idea.”
- “Alienates,” at the bottom of the third page, should be the plural conjugation. It is applied to the plural “theories” earlier in the sentence.
- You are valiantly trying to be politically correct with your “him/her” on the last page, but in formal writing, you can defer to the masculine. At the very least, make this “him or her” and eliminate the slash, which looks unprofessional.
- At the top of the last page, you refer to “synthesis ideas.” You’re using “synthesis” as an adjective here, but this is not the proper adjective form of the word.

Sentence Structure

- In the paragraph at the bottom of the second page, you have a sentence that reads “The stage was set for a shift of power away from religion, and the church hierarchy knew it.” To me, this sounds like a one-line movie summary written by someone who is trying to make the movie sound more dramatic than it actually is. Consider rewording this.
- You state that scientists rejected Gosse “for different reasons” than theologians. It seems readily apparent to me that the reasons scientists would disapprove of Gosse’s ideas

would not be the same as theologians' reasons for disliking Gosse, so perhaps this phrase is unnecessary?

- I think you rewrote the sentence on page three beginning with "For some scientists," and didn't change the rest of the sentence when you modified part of it.
- At the end of this same paragraph, the last two sentences are redundant. You state that scientists feared losing relevance and influence, and because of this, the fear of losing relevance and influence led scientists to reject Gosse. This could be condensed into one sentence.
- Many of your sentences, particularly in the paragraph in which you discuss Darwin, present your ideas as conjecture; for example, "*Omphalos* must have appeared very threatening." You are right to introduce some doubt to these statements, because it would be very difficult indeed for you to unequivocally attribute particular emotions to the Church at that time, but your wording leaves a great deal of room for the reader to conclude that it is equally likely that your claim is false.
- I notice throughout your paper instances in which you use longer and more cumbersome wordings rather than the more direct phrasing. To cite a few examples, you write "the profession of science in general" (page 3), "was not dissimilar from" (page 2); both of these, as well as others throughout your paper, could be made more concise.
- You also tend to use phrases that make your sentences longer and wordier (perhaps in an effort to sound more erudite), but that don't really add anything to your argument. For example: "or the like" (page 3), "it is not as if" (page 3), "for that reason" (page 4).

Arguments

- I am not sure Debs is the best example you could use here. You say that Debs was arrested because his political views were too far from either political party. I am not very well-versed in Debs' particular case, but my understanding is that he was arrested for violating the Espionage Act that was established when the U.S. entered WWI, not because of his radical political views. Debs was a socialist; he challenged democracy, not the specific views of either political party. Furthermore, while Gosse made an attempt to unite the two "parties," Debs' ideas were completely different from either side. I think in this analogy, Gosse is less like Debs and more like the only Independent in a country where everyone is politically polarized. Your extrapolation of this analogy, that without the support of a party, a third-party candidate cannot succeed, is very strong, but the particular example you have chosen doesn't quite support your point.
- You say towards the end of your first paragraph that Gosse's ideas scared the church and scientists. You first introduced this idea in the introduction, and I bypassed it then, thinking that you would extrapolate upon it later. But now you bring it up again, and it still is not explained. Perhaps your next sentence is meant to be the explanation, but I think the assertion that Gosse "scared" both sides is a claim you can't make; it is attributing an emotional state where you have no evidence to do so.
- In the third paragraph, you claim that the Church wasn't able to threaten people. Why not? When Galileo proposed his ideas, the Church was certainly capable of threats and punishments, so what changed?
- Your argument for the reason why science rejected Gosse is parallel to why religion rejected him. However, the argument is much stronger for religion than for science. Because religion lacks empirical evidence, calling into question one aspect of God's

character would certainly raise doubts as to the rest of religious teachings. But science is a predictive vehicle. Russell described science as the process of finding causal laws. If the scientific discoveries that are made can predict accurately what will be observed, then does it matter whether the foundation of these discoveries originated naturally or divinely?

- At the beginning of the next paragraph, you claim that the acceptance of Darwin's ideas proves that people were open to accepting new concepts. Is it necessarily true that people would be open to all new concepts, or only those that they thought made sense? As you have just described, nobody really liked Gosse's idea, and it had less evidence behind it than Darwin's, so the lack of proof simply made it easier to reject. I am not sure anyone would have believed Darwin if he didn't present his ideas with a great deal of empirical support – while Darwin had this support readily available, Gosse didn't.
- The conflict between science and religion isn't entirely about creationism versus evolution. You state that the issue of "the origin of humans" has polarized society, but Gosse's synthesis (and indeed all syntheses) is not aimed at solely the origin of humans. They are meant to reconcile all of science with all of religion, which goes considerably beyond creation.

The Conclusion

Your phrase "a unifying synthesis" is redundant; the purpose of a synthesis is to unify. As you did earlier, you refer to Gosse's idea as though it applies to only human origins, while his thoughts actually are meant to examine all of religion and all of science. Your verb tenses are inconsistent. You use present tense most of the time, but you state in the first sentence "Gosse was the third party candidate." Perhaps this is not a verb tense issue so much as an issue of specifying the context in which Gosse resembled a third party candidate. Later in the paragraph, it seems unprofessional to use parentheses.

A larger issue with your conclusion is that you don't go beyond the arguments you present in the preceding paragraphs. The conclusion should be a place in which you extrapolate upon your ideas to give a larger sense of the state of the world; your conclusion summarizes your main points. I think you could almost use your last body paragraph as a conclusion, with just a bit of added content. If we look at the conclusion as the place where you bring in a broader theme, your last body paragraph does this. Throughout the rest of your paper, you discuss the specific incident of Gosse, but in the last body paragraph, you raise the question "if Gosse's synthesis fails, is it even possible for one to succeed?" This is the question that you should be answering in your conclusion. I like the idea you present in the last sentence of your conclusion, that attempts at synthesis are logical successes but societal failures, but aside from that point, I think your last body paragraph brings your paper to a much stronger close than your conclusion does. If you expand this paragraph to draw a bit more comparison between the general third party candidate and the general synthesis idea, this would make a really compelling closing argument.