

Information, etc

The Urth list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 18 Apr 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4569>

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James Wynn — 18 Apr 2006, 16:56

On 4/12/06, Chris <rasputin_ at hotmail.com> wrote:

There is a general problem with saying that the Christian *faith* is "based on" miracles. Basically if you know, by whatever means, that the event is possible, then it doesn't require faith at all. In its ideal form, faith would admit that the event was rationally impossible, and believe in it anyway.

On 4/12/06, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com >

I think this is more-or-less true; the loophole in it is, "with God all things are possible."

I wasn't going interject on this thread and now that it is 6 days later

I shouldn't. But I haven't been able to get this back and forth off my mind. It so perfectly encapsulates the divide between modern seculars' view of Faith as opposed to that of modern observants and virtually all pre-Enlightenment Westerners. It is always amazing that the two world-views are so often seemingly unaware of each other. This IS actually applicable to Wolfe in that it is still not clear to me where Wolfe stands in this bifurcation.

For modern seculars Faith is practically antonymous to Reason.

In Faith, we place all those things that Reason denies, but which we require as humans. Reason says we are the product of natural forces within a closed system. But most can't live like that so they take a "leap of faith", a jump into darkness, that there is a divine Creator who made us in his image, (temporarily, if they are enlightened) suspending their knowledge of what Reason tells them. Reason says that Love and Altruism are a natural phenomenon of evolution, a trick of sorts by our brains and glands, that gave the genes of our ancestors the upper hand over those of competitors. But when we look in the face of our beloved we cannot as human beings accept thinking of them that way: we would not give up our lives for our genes. So we take the leap again and declare that Love is transcendent.

On the other hand, the modern observants (lets use seven-day Creationist Christians as our guinea pigs here) see materialist seculars as merely followers of an alternate (idolatrict) religion. They believe Genesis, and seculars believe what some science journalist they've never met wrote in Discover Magazine or said on Nova on PBS. The faith of observants is founded on their observed experience: they trust the integrity of the Person that has so influenced their lives, and therefore believe what they think he has told them. ("Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" Hebrews 11:1)

This division was mapped (literally) by Evangelical apologist Frances Schaeffer in "The God Who Is There" and "Escape

From Reason". Quoting Alfred North Whitehead's assertion that
modern science

could not have arisen without the world-view established by Judeo-Christian theology, he predicted that science as-we-know-it will end when we all follow this tact to its logical

conclusion that Reason itself (founded on the premise that human observation is valid) is itself unreasonable.

J

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 18 Apr 2006, 17:45 · in reply to James Wynn

On 4/18/06, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:
...I haven't been able to get this back and forth off my mind.
It so perfectly encapsulates the divide between modern
seculars' view of Faith as opposed to that of modern
observants and virtually all pre-Enlightenment Westerners.

H'mmm. I found your post interesting and compelling, except for one thing: if my "back and forth" with Christ "perfectly encapsulates" this divide, then I ought to find myself in one or the other of these two positions:

For modern seculars Faith is practically antonymous to Reason.

...

On the other hand, the modern observants ... see materialist
seculars as merely followers of an alternate (idolatrish) religion.

Yet, I do not. I do see secularism as a belief-system, but to call it a "religion" is to abuse both words ("secular" and "religion"). And I certainly do not see Faith as "antonymic to Reason": complementary, rather. We are required to apply Reason to all things; we are required to apply Faith (whether in God, or in Luck, or in the perversity of the inanimate, or...) to make up the deficit in those situations where Reason cannot help us but a decision is required.

--Dan'l

I do not fear Satan half so much as I fear those who fear him.

-- St Teresa of Avila

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

James Wynn — 18 Apr 2006, 18:19 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On 4/18/06, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:
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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> replied
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for one thing: if my "back and forth" with Christ "perfectly
encapsulates" this divide, then I ought to find myself in one
or the other of these two positions:

Dan'l,

I assure you I did not intend to assign teams for anyone, let alone you. Actually, (although I didn't say so) I chose seven-day Creationist Christians as an archetype (which I was fairly certain did not include you) deliberately to draw a starker line. It was the discussion that I thought encapsulated the division, not the entire world-view and personal syntax of the particular participants (which I cannot know). In fact, you prefaced your response with the assertion that you fundamentally agreed with Chris, but then went on to write several paragraphs on what you disagreed with. Perhaps by focusing on that disagreement I have created a magnified illusion of your particular differences with Chris. That illusion was inadvertant.

Nevertheless, this division comes to my mind a lot when reading Wolfe as I cannot always be sure of whether a discrete "soul" exists in his stories rather than merely a repeated pattern and in what way the Increate/Outsider is injecting Himself in His creation. In other words, I cannot be sure of where Wolfe stands on the reality of materialism and spirituality. I doubt that he is in every way "traditional" or "orthodox" (whether one means, by that word, "Catholic" or merely "Augustinian".)

J

Matthew King — 18 Apr 2006, 19:32 · in reply to James Wynn

On Apr 18, 2006, at 9:56 AM, James Wynn wrote:
This division was mapped (literally) by Evangelical apologist Frances Schaeffer in "The God Who Is There" and "Escape From Reason". Quoting Alfred North Whitehead's assertion that *modern* science could not have arisen without the world-view established by Judeo-Christian theology, he predicted that science as-we-know-it will end when we all follow this tact to its logical conclusion that Reason itself (founded on the premise that human observation is valid) is itself unreasonable.

As Karl Popper tells it, David Hume had already reached this conclusion way back in the eighteenth century. Hume, in trying to justify inductive reasoning, proved it to be logically invalid. As Hume believed not only science, but everyday knowledge to be based on induction, he was forced to conclude that all knowledge is unjustifiable and logically invalid.

Epistemology since then has tended to either ignore this or glorify it.

Chris — 18 Apr 2006, 20:31 · in reply to James Wynn

James said:

For modern seculars Faith is practically antonymous to Reason. In Faith, we place all those things that Reason denies, but which we require as humans. Reason says we are the product of natural forces within a closed system. But most can't live like that so they take a "leap of faith", a jump into darkness, that there is a divine Creator who made us in his image, (temporarily, if they are enlightened) suspending their knowledge of what Reason tells them. Reason says that Love and Altruism are a natural phenomenon of evolution, a trick of sorts by our brains and glands, that gave the genes of our ancestors the upper hand over those of competitors. But when we look in the face of our beloved we cannot as human beings accept thinking of them that way: we would not give up our lives for our genes. So we take the leap again and declare that Love is transcendent.

The problem you get into there is that when you explain love and altruism as evolutionary phenomena, you find that what is left of "love" and "altruism", lacking moral/normative dimension, no longer fits the description of the original terms. When you say that they're evolutionary tricks, you have not explained love or altruism, you've claimed that they do not exist and gone on to replace them with two homonymous terms. And there is a school of course that does this, but many other "seculars" who are not particularly interested in "faith" don't accept this view. All that aside, I think that the modern secular view is, like Dan I said, that faith

and reason are complementary. After all, you have to get your first principles from somewhere, and Reason can't give them to you. Faith is one place you can start from.

On the other hand, the modern observants (lets use seven-day Creationist Christians as our guinea pigs here) see materialist seculars as merely followers of an alternate (idolatrish) religion. They believe Genesis, and seculars believe what some science journalist they've never met wrote in Discover Magazine or said on Nova on PBS. The faith of observants is founded on their observed experience: they trust the integrity of the Person that has so influenced their lives, and therefore believe what they think he has told them. ("Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" Hebrews 11:1)

It's not my habit to make strong statements like this, but I'll go out on a limb and say that while this view of faith is distinctly modern - in fact it's the one Kierkegaard railed against - it is only "faith" in a degenerate sense, and certainly captures little of the primordial meaning of the word. What you're describing is simply unreflective belief, which is a set that is not co-extensive with faith.

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J

Matt's quote of Popper was interesting on this point, although Popper was certainly putting a spin on Hume. You don't need Hume to know that inductive reasoning doesn't meet rationalist standards. Remember that rationalism looks for truth that is *universal* and *necessary*. Inductive reason never claimed to give us that. What Hume did was to place inductive reasoning in a more central position. You could maybe say that Hume thus showed that all our knowledge was somehow uncertain, but it would be better I think to say that he claimed that our *real* criteria for what we call "certainty" in the daily course of our lives is not quite so strict as rationalists suppose. Science has come to grips with this quite easily - you won't find many scientists claiming the necessary, absolute truth of their theories. But this can only be a gloss since Hume's move runs a little deeper than this.

In any event Reason does not become unreasonable by starting from a premise that itself has no rational justification - if that were so, logic could never have gotten off the ground even with the ancients. The same charge could be levelled against the very first geometers and mathematicians, it's not characteristic of the modern age.

David Duffy — 18 Apr 2006, 22:04 · in reply to James Wynn

On Tue, 18 Apr 2006, James Wynn wrote:

Nevertheless, this division comes to my mind a lot when reading Wolfe as I cannot always be sure of whether a discrete "soul" exists in his stories rather than merely a repeated pattern and in what way the Increate/Outsider is injecting Himself in His creation. In other words, I cannot be sure of where Wolfe stands on the reality of materialism and spirituality. I doubt that he is in every way "traditional" or "orthodox" (whether one means, by that word, "Catholic" or merely "Augustinian".)

I think Wolfe has spent a lot of time on this, starting with meditating on implications of the split-brain patients and of psychosurgery (where there are induced changes in what we would

have previously regarded as characteristics of the soul), and continuing through all his twinned-personality heroes, where there are hints about when a single-souled person has replaced a more traditional possession type situations.

David Duffy.