

"Observants"

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 19 Apr 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4572>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 19 Apr 2006, 20:30

James,

It seems to me that your use of the term "observants" is ... well, a little narrow. It is possible both to be an observant Christian and to subscribe to the findings of modern evolutionary biology (including its psychological implications).

I consider myself an observant Christian. (Sp: an adult convert to the Church of Rome.) But I have no argument with any of the _scientific_ observations of Richard Dawkins, et al.; in fact, I read enough in the subject that I feel well-enough informed to "take sides" (preferring Dawkins' interpretations, in general, to those of the late Stephen Jay Gould).

The Catholic church, a while back, declared that -- though it is not heretical to believe in literal 7-day creation -- it _is_ heretical to _insist_ upon it, because it attempts to put limitations on God's options in _how_ He chose to create the universe.

Yes, Faith is one place to start from...but I said: to observants all such sources of first principles are matters of Faith of one sect or another.

For any position, your first principles are taken on faith. Ultimately, you come down to unprovable assumptions, if they are only things like "I exist" and "the data my senses feed me are reliable within certain limits."

My point is that observants (as I'll persist in calling them although I realize many secular-minded people attend church regularly and many who do not attend still believe in revealed Truth) believe Faith and Reason will **validate**, not merely complement, each other...that they both exist equally in the **objective** world, as do "means and motive" to criminal investigator. Their Faith IS a continuous intellectual endeavor.

We part company here.

Seven-day creationists do _not_ value faith and reason equally; they insist that reason must be the handmaid of faith, and that all Observable Facts must be interpreted to align with (their version of) Revealed Truth.

This is why I describe your use of the word "observants" as "narrow." It seems to me that by "observant" you mean only those who treat faith and reason in this manner.

There is an alternative approach: I believe in Revealed Truth.

I also believe in Observable Facts.

When they seem to be in conflict, it means that I have misunderstood one or both of them; and this is where Reason complements Faith. Faith will not allow me to discard a Revealed Truth because it is inconvenient or incompatible with Observable Fact; Reason will not allow me to discard an Observable Fact because it is inconvenient or incompatible with Revealed Truth.

To maintain integrity, I have to understand both in such a way that I reject neither, and yet resolve _apparent_ contradictions.

It isn't always easy. In fact, I suspect that the difficulties it presents are one reason why so many people _do_ take refuge in Fundamentalism, Literalism, etc.

Heh, heh, heh. I've heard many secular scientists *remind* us that science does not ascribe absolute truth to its theories...but only when comparing it favorably to religion. As a voracious reader of popular scientific literature, I am pretty certain that that caveat is not mentioned otherwise.

I'd start by having a look at Feynman's lovely little book QED. Feynman describes _exactly_ the evidence that makes QED the best-supported theory (at that time) in the history of science ... and goes on to add that the next decimal place of observational detail _could_ derail it.

Not bad for a guy who won a Nobel for that particular theory.

This isn't to say that many scientists aren't arrogant (I've certainly picked over that ground before, esp. as regards the Dawkinsite "bright" business). But "science" -- as opposed to _scientists_, who are as human as you, me, and Chris -- in its proper form _always_ doubts its theories.

That's what experiments are _for_: trying to find conditions for which the current best theory is insufficient.

I've yet to read an article by a scientist (I might have missed it) in which any consideration is given to the fact that scientists themselves (the fields they study, the conclusions they draw, and the overall scientific consensus at any given time) are as subject to environmental pressures and natural selection as the colors on a butterfly's wings.

As such: nor do I. But what I do see a fair amount is "more experiments will be needed to establish this." This is very much an appeal to the ecosystem (fund more experiments!) -- but also an acknowledgement that the study _is_ limited in scope by, yes, the conditions of the scientific ecosystem: if only the finite capacity of a given niche's inhabitant to "complete" a study of a subject.

[B]oth name Nietzsche as the one who irretrievably stripped human understanding of its pretenses. Schaeffer said he "crossed the line of despair".

I'm also something of a Nietzsche fan.

Nietzsche was very much "of his time." He was hugely influenced by the arrogance of the Victorian scientific establishment, and particularly their tendency to think they'd done away with God.

Nietzsche _wanted_ there to be a God. But -- in the light of the work of Darwin and Kelvin and many others -- he _couldn't_ believe, at least not in the Christian sense.

He spent his later active years raging against God for the sin of not existing.

(Read the passage in Thus Spoke Zarathustra -- slightly modified, it was also the end of The Gay Science -- in which Nietzsche announced the "Death of God." It's fascinating, because the part nobody quotes very much is that "we ourselves have committed this monstrous crime." This puts a whole different spin on it--)

--Dan'I

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>

Nathan Spears — 19 Apr 2006, 20:39 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0060007451/sr=8-1/qid=1145478824/ref=sr_1_1/102-7129126-3506518?%5Fencoding=UTF8

I saw this in a bookstore today but didn't have time to read all of it. Has anyone else read this story? It was set in a historical context, between the Inquisition and the witch hunts, and seemed to touch very quickly and obviously (though not poorly) on themes that permeated *Shadow of the Torturer*. At least in the five or six pages I read.

Nate

--- Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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