

SCIENCE AND RELIGION
GRADED PAPER 2
ELLEN SWIONTKOWSKI

The thesis and arguments

Your thesis is stated far too late, and you meander your way towards it. The thesis itself is an interesting one, but your arguments are weak. You provide far too little justification for your assertions. Most importantly, you claim that *fate* and *God's plan* are equivalent, but that critical assertion is neither justified nor obviously legitimate. Ultimately, your arguments fail to persuade.

The writing

Your writing is far too informal. Worse, a substantial portion of the text seems to be filler phrases that are devoid of meaning. You also suffer substantially from ambiguous or undefined antecedents to your pronouns, making it frequently difficult to determine to what you are referring. In many portions of the text, you could have substantially simplified the sentence structure, eliminating excess words and more directly expressing yourself.

Items marked on the paper

(1) Not only are this kind of example mere filler, but the template questions you provided are not particularly illuminating.

(2) No. This argument may be rational or sensible, but it is not a matter of *logic*. Something is *logical* when, assuming the truth of the premisses, the conclusion **must** follow. That structure does not exist here.

(3) What new concept? All you've said is that geocentrism was debunked; you haven't stated what was proposed as its replacement.

(4) First, more superficially, this statement is wishy-washy. Is it looming or isn't it? What would *looming* mean here?

Second, and more substantively, there's nothing "looming in the distance" about it. Determinism vs. free will has been a full-fledged point of serious theological and philosophical debate for some time. Within the science-vs-religion conflict, it's been an intense point of conflict since Newton's classical mechanics in the 17th century.

(5) Is **this** statement your thesis? It comes far too late, and at the end of an absurdly long paragraph that should be divided into at least three paragraphs.

(6) Even liberally religious people do not necessarily view their faith or their religion as *casual*.

(7) Do you have evidence that *fate* is really a Christian principle? There's a gap between "God has a plan" and "God has determined my fate." To the contrary, "God's plan" seems usually to explain natural occurrences or unintentional human acts (e.g., weather incidents, accidents, etc.). I've never encountered its use as a suggestion that free will does not exist and that **my** intentional actions are part of God's plan. You need specific support for this unusual view of fate as a Christian concept on par with free will.

(8) Not quite. According to determinism, *human will* doesn't exist—it is an illusion that is subsumed by the fully causal interactions of physical entities.

Grade: B-

Modifying the Christian View of Determinism

Ellen Swiontkowski

The purpose of science is to answer questions about our natural world. ~~Why does this happen? What does this mean? Where does this theory apply?~~ The purpose of religion, many would argue, is to offer guidance and meaning ~~to people regarding our lives on this earth. Why do we exist? What is the meaning of life?~~

~~Why does this happen?~~ These two what? These two interact and often clash when physical unknowns branch into spiritual. Geocentrism was widely held as true because due to the fact that God, this means.

2 logically, would place those created in his image centrally. Do not use as an unmodified pronoun. This was disproven by the combined efforts of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo. It took many years for this

3 new concept to be accepted, but the greatest and most lasting opposition to this came from movement was the Church (Russell, 19-45). of what? are modern examples that of

creationism and evolution. Many Christians still hold that God created the Earth in backward seven days six thousand years ago, while strong scientific evidence shows that the

Earth evolved over billions of years (Russell, 52). Another conflict that is perhaps word choice looming in the distance is that of determinism. In *Science and Religion*, Russell

writes, "Determinism as a general doctrine asserts that *complete* determination of the future by the past is always possible, theoretically, if we know enough about the past and casual laws (147)." Therefore, if determinism is true, then our future actions can be predicted by the complete knowledge of a past situation. This implies that we lack free will, and therefore are not truly in control of our actions. too informal; also ungrammatical This is something that many Christians immediately have a problem with due to the widely

viewed importance of free will to their faith. On top of this, the almost natural

what? weak

①

I don't know what

this means.

Is it a concept? or a movement?

What is "that"? Confusing.

④

Justification for this statement?

tendency for a Christian to oppose determinism due to its scientific nature promotes

conflict as well. However, the commonly held Christian belief that God "has a plan"

is up (more) harmonious than discordant with determinism due to the unknowns

What does this mean?

surrounding both systems. Therefore, a Christian—even a Christian scientist—can

hypothesize a deterministic and Christian world.

value of this phrase?

5

w.c.

Although there are different types of Christianity—from the extremely

conservative to the very casual—~~one must realize that from person to person, faith~~

6

What?

is different] Some people take everything written in the Bible literally, whereas

Too informal

relevance?

others interpret it to fit into their lifestyle. So, while some Christians are still

struggling with the fact that creationism as it is told in Genesis may not be true,

What system?

others have accepted it and moved on. This same system applies to determinism. If

more evidence informal comes up that shows that determinism is likely true, some will

it?

accept without a second thought while others will be more reluctant. Viewing

7

justification

determinism with the Christian belief of fate in mind can ease this hesitance.

Jeremiah 29:11 states, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the

LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a

Improper quoting.

future." Interpreting this verse literally tells believers that God knows what is in

store for them. To what extent is this fate determined? Some believe that God does

not know the inbetween but does know the final product. Other, more literal

interpretations say that God knows every aspect of our lives, from the big things

such as whom we will marry to the little things like the daily decisions we make.

But does he know them before we make them?

Where things become murky is sin. When humans sin, they do so against God's will,

against how He intends for people to behave. Sin is something that humans do out of nature, but God never intended for us to do so. If and when God maps out our lives, does he know the sin we will commit? There are several ^{what?} in the Bible when Jesus "predicts" sin. At the last supper, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." Judas immediately spoke up, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" to which Jesus responded, "Yes, it is you (Matthew 26: 21-25)." Judas did exactly that. Did he act out of free will? Or were his actions predetermined—as opposed to predicted—and therefore out of his hands? A confusion surrounding the idea of free will thus emerges within the Christian faith. With this confusion and unknown in mind, it may be easier to see the semblance between determinism and Christianity.

Once again, determinism is the doctrine that everything that has ever and will ever happen is caused by forces outside of human will. So, we have no actual choices, because everything has already been determined for us by the laws of nature. Incidentally, many Christians believe that God manifests Himself in nature. The natural laws that govern our bodies, dictating our next moves, could very well be God's appearance in nature. God "knows the plans he has for us" and nature, if every aspect of a situation is observed, can tell us what the future holds. These two supposedly conflicting doctrines reach the same conclusion. There are many questions surrounding both the doctrine of determinism and the religious idea of fate that have yet to be answered. Because of these unknowns, similar conclusions can be reached. Whether or not a person, namely a Christian scientist, accepts this conclusion as a possibility is a matter of personal faith.

Repetition not necessary

8

support?!

What two conflicting doctrines?

Like what?

Similar to what?

Why do scientists hold any kind of special position for this topic?

Works Cited

BibleGateway.com. 2008, Gospel Communications International, 16 October 2008

<<http://www.biblegateway.com/>>

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