

Study on the Relationship Between Science and Religion

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Abstract—There is important relationship between science and religion no matter on the aspect of theory or practice. Through the careful and detailed analysis of the relationship between science and religion, it can be concluded as four modes including mutual conflict, mutual promotion, respective independence and reasonable communication.

Keywords—science; religion; relationship development

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid science development, science has been firmly in the position of predominant cultural value. However, religion still exists in our social life and spiritual life. They are two kinds of power with huge impacts. And the issue of relationship between them has always been paid much attention and especially given much attention and argument in western world. Many scholars review the relationship between science and religion. In general, the current relationship between science and religion is mainly divided into four kinds: mutual conflict, mutual promotion, respective independence and reasonable communication. This paper mainly explains and thinks from the perspective of the four kinds of relationship and hoops to play certain positive role in the treatment and development of relationship between contemporary science and religion.

II. CONCEPTS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

A. Concept of Science

The philosophers and scientists have always been trying to provide a sufficient essential definition on what are science and scientific method which, however, is not a success. Nietzsche thought that science is a kind of social, historic and cultural human activity and science invents natural laws but not just finds the natural laws that do not change. The modern science aims at the truth completely proved by using knowledge (theory) and experiment under the reasonable and objective preconditions. It refers to the study based on the positivism advocated by Bacon and the experimental methods with the practice pioneer of Galilei for obtaining the system knowledge of the world. The science is divided into natural science with the object of natural phenomena and the social sciences with the object of social phenomenon which are distinguished from arts, philosophy, religion and literature, etc. Modern science also includes the science of thinking with the object of existence of human

thinking. It was once mentioned in the Introduction of Modern Science and Technology that “it can be put simply that science is the system knowledge that truthfully reflects the inherent laws of objective things.”

B. Concept of Religion

Religion is a kind of cultural phenomenon which will appear when the human society develops to certain historical period and belongs to special social ideology.

In ancient times, because of the human exploration of the unknown of the universe and the pursuit of human for expressing the desire of immortalization and liberation, they believed that there existed supernatural mystical power or entity beyond of the real world which caused the fear and worship of human for such mystery and it further derived belief cognition and ritual activity systems. Just like the folk myth, it also has its own myths and legends which are mutually connected and the essential is a kind of spiritual ballast and ultimate concern. As for religion, from the perspective of sociology, one thing needs at least three conditions for becoming religion: (1) a set of moral principle and ethical rules (2) respective worship objects and worship ceremony; (3) becoming a kind of independent social organization.

In this paper, we mainly discuss the Christianity. We know that religion plays an important role in development process of western philosophy. Especially, through combination of ancient Greek and ancient Hebrew cultures, Christianity becomes very important in the construction of western philosophy. The issue of relationship between science and religion that we will mainly discuss below takes Christianity as an example.

III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

A. Mutual Conflict Between Science and Religion

Since the birth of religion and the pre-science era, the mutual conflict between science and religion has always been a historic truth and eternal theme- which is perceived and calmly acknowledged by many scholars.

In the discussion of relationship between science and religion, Russell published his opinions in the book Religion and Science. Meanwhile, Russell was also the representative of the theory of religion and science conflict. But he

obviously tended to science on that ground, just like he said in the book, "there is the long-term conflict between religion and science and science always wins in this conflict until recent years."

From the opinion of Russell, the reasons of conflict between religion and science can be basically divided into following aspects:

1) *Conceptual conflict*: The conflict between religion and science can be reviewed from the doctrine and scientific concept and the interests of religious apprentices are threatened by those who doubt doctrine, therefore those religious apprentices and worldly governors have sufficient reasons to be afraid of the revolutionary theories of scientists.

2) *Logical conflict*: Russell once said that the cultivated people in middle Ages all had logic consistence which also meant that the conflict between religion and science will be more intense when science disproves religious doctrines because the religious doctrine has certain logic consistence.

3) *Method conflicts*: The methods obtained from scientific concepts and religious doctrines are completely different. The religious doctrines set out from the broad assumptions and also claim to contain the eternal and infallible truth and therefore cannot let people question. But, science is temporary and relative. It realizes that the theory and method are continuously developing and improving. Science is a process which is continuously revised with the deepening of cognition. Therefore, science encourages people to abandon the pursuit of absolute truth and learn the practical and realistic cognitive attitude.

4) *Conflict of authority and observation*: In religion, the Bible, Catholicism and Aristotelianism are all apodeictic which cannot be shaken by those creative thoughts and study of truth. However, science is not like that. Scientists will not believe just because of authority. They are willing to resort to evidence of senses, carry out necessary observation and insist on the theories based on truth.

Meanwhile, there are also many scholars approving the statement that religion and science are conflicting. In the Introduction of Mechanics and Critical History of Its Development, Mach described the popular opinions in their age and said: when people talk about the conflicts between science and theology or talk about the "conflict" between science and church more appropriately, on one hand, we can know that the church opposes advanced history records; on the other hand, we have the outstanding people including Galilei and Giordano Bruno who are willing to "sacrifice" for science. The science under development progress was supposed to become flourishing in surprising speed: however the priests meddled and held down the development. In this white war, church resorts to extreme measures, it just considers how to win; there are never such worldly policies being implemented in such selfish, shameless or crucial way. Whitehead confessed that "it seems that the scientific achievements and religious believes have reached the situation of public rupture; it is either to give up the clear

scientific theories or to give up the clear religious believers and there are no other ways. Both parties all draw such a conclusion." Ben-David confessed that "no matter it is the monarchy or Democracy, no matter it is the despotic state or free country, they all need science, but religions do not need science. The conflict between science and religion has more serious impacts on the overall advance of science than that between science and government."

B. Mutual Promotion of Science and Religion

The second relationship between science and religion is mutual assistance and mutual promotion of science and religion. In such relationship, as the representative, Einstein put forward the representative opinion. He insisted on "universal religious emotion" which means the worship and belief of people on the internal order and harmony in the empirical world. There is no anthropomorphic god in the universal religion. Its function is not to transmit the will of God, but to disclose "the target of yearning life of human". The important objective of this belief is to "set people free from the selfish requirements, desire and fear as far as possible". And such kind of universal religious emotion comes from heart and doesn't need those tedious doctrines. At the same time, it can play more important function of moralization compared with old religion. [1] Einstein once made a very vivid metaphor. He said "science will be like cripple without religion and religion will be like blind without science".

Except for Einstein, there are also some other scholars making their understanding. For example, on the aspect of positive role of science on religion, the scholar, Midgley once said that "we can achieve the concept of rescue through science which is ancient and strong. It is far from nonsense, but it is now virtuous concept chaos. It has many components- some are useful and some are useless- most of them need to be classified. In the 17th century, when the modern science emerged for the first time, it is completely natural thought. The great thinkers at that time thought that it is certainly the center of their efforts. Nature is created by the god and study of nature is one of many ways for praising the glory of god. Such praise is understood as the appropriate fate of spirit and the meaning of life. While on the aspect of positive role of religion on science, there are many scholars approving. Foster (M. B. Foster) and Whitehead once mentioned that the Christian faith has not been scientifically developed and can even play the role of promotion. Science was generated from Christian culture at the earliest. Religious culture is not the threat of science but the helper of science.

C. Respective Independence of Science and Religion

Some scholars believe that science and religion are the relations of respective independent. That is to say, science and religion are separate and irrelevant, which mean that they will be neither mutual contradiction and conflict nor mutual promotion and interdependence. They just like two parallel lines that do not intersect each other in their respective development. As long as they develop in their respective territories, do not involve into each other's fields

and have clear boundaries, they will live in peace with each other.

Darwin who is a biologist is also a representative figure in such relationship. Through the exploration for all life of Darwin, we understand the evolution of his religious outlook. Darwin had an orthodox belief when he learned the theology at Cambridge University in his early years — Christianity, and then abandoned his original vision being a priest when he traveled around the world: as a result, his religious beliefs began to change. The fundamental oscillation in his religious beliefs began with his understanding of species variability, with the continuous deepening of his thinking about species problem, Darwin had moved to path of deviation from religious belief. Brown once commented: "No one knows better than him that the research of the original problem of species will make him run counter to his religious beliefs. Regardless of opening any notebook, he will feel the seductive appeal sent by a universe without God to him." In the end, instead of recognizing any form or sect of religion, he chose to accept the "agnosticism" proposed by Thomas Henry Huxley and called himself as an agnostic.

In addition, as one of the representatives of the critical school, Duhem once made his opinions on the view that science and religion were completely separated, and the contents of his opinions are very representative. On the one hand, science is not affected by religious theology because physicists are not affected by metaphysics or religious beliefs and others in the process of research and practice and at the same time they use the method of positivism. Therefore, the researched theoretical results are not only representative of science of those so-called believers, non-believers will also recognize them. On the other hand, religious theology is not affected by science, and the principles of physics by itself or in essence will not have any influence on metaphysical philosophy or theological religious theory in theory. So Duhem once had concluded: "here you have theories that are neither believers nor non-believers, but purely theoretical physics of physicist's theory; they are extremely suitable for the laws researched by taxonomist, are incapable of opposing any assertion of whether metaphysical or religious doctrine, and also are incapable of giving effective support to any such assertion. When a theorist invades the realm of metaphysics or religious doctrine, whether he intends to attack them or wants to guard them, the weapons he has used so successfully in his own realm are still bootless and powerless in his hands; the logic of empirical science that forges such weapon accurately marks the frontier, in case beyond such frontier, the hardness given by this logic will becomes blunt and its cutting ability will lose.

In modern times, Halper once said: "In modern society, science performs the basic function of world interpretation rather than the previous religion, which is the most essential difference between modern and pre-modern social patterns." To some extent, science and religion present such kind of state that science has jurisdiction over the understanding of the external world, while religion has jurisdiction over the emotional field of people's heart, and they do not interfere with each other.

D. Reasonable Communication Between Science and Religion

There are also some scholars who do not fully agree with the above three views, especially oppose the two absolute views of only conflict or mutual promotion. As the scholar Brooker once said, "It is not sufficient to simplify the relation between science and religion as a conflict relation; however, it is equally problematic to construct a revisionist history for the purpose of apologetics. Many treatises on science and religion are constructed based on preconceptions of conflict or harmony. If we want to understand the richness and charm of the interaction between religion and science, it is necessary to go beyond these constraints.

Therefore, some scholars believe that science and religion will present a new relationship, that is, a reasonable communication. This relationship is valid both in theory and in practice. First of all, science and religion are social establishment of the existence of history and are still very important social establishment in modern society, more importantly, both of them are indispensable. Cassirer believes that belief and knowledge, revelation and reason are not necessarily antagonistic. Pope John Paul II once said, "Science can remove religious errors and superstitions, religion can remove scientific idolatry and false absoluteness. Each can bring the other into a broader world, and both can be further developed. In Barber's view, the two should not be regarded as absolutely separate relations, this is because: first, although there are many differences between science and religion, there are similarities in methods; second, we should seek the same world outlook between them; third, we need defend the importance of natural theology; fourth, from the perspective of science, we should examine the relationship between God and the world with a new view of nature. Torrence once put: "science and religion are different in object and their methodology and nature are also not same. Nevertheless, they can still complement each other because both science and religion are not perfect, and they need each other's supplement to make themselves much wiser." On the one hand, religion needs the enlightenment of scientific knowledge and the guidance of methodology gave by science, on the other hand, science needs religion to guide the value orientation and supplement the meaning of life.

Finally, in order to achieve a reasonable communication between science and religion, we should do the following:

First of all, we should draw a clear distinction between science and religion and let them stick to our own fields, do not interfere with each other, respect each other and live in peace. Second, religion should receive the enlightenment of scientific knowledge to correct erroneous contents and interpretations in doctrines and scriptures, and contact with natural things and develop with the development of science. Third, science does not infringe upon the territory of religion and respects personal beliefs, especially in the contemporary society where science is in a much higher position: science should adopt an attitude of equality, tolerance and humility.

IV. CONCLUSION

The relationship between science and religion is studied to promote the development of human society, which is purposed to build a bridge of harmonious development between science and religion and to create a win-win situation. In a sense, the reflection on the relationship between religion and science is also a reflection on the way of human existence.

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