

Why does ruse say that creationism should not be understood as a science

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Why does Ruse say that Creationism should not be understood as a science? Creationism-science is an epitome of an oxymoron; a phrase that has built in it two institutions of knowledge that do not amalgamate. Taking the literal senses of the words that make up phrase is taking up a much bigger debate; the debate of religion versus science. The two have not had fecund collaboration in history except the uneasy relationship philosophy, religion and science had during the medieval period. Called the dark ages, it shows that combining religion, philosophy and science does little good, if any. The burning of Giordano Bruno at the stake for pushing the envelope past what the church accepted underscores the uneasy marriage that was philosophy (and by extension science) and religion. At the center of this discussion are creationism and why the philosopher and historian Michael Ruse holds that it should not be understood as a science. First, it is necessary to look at what creationism is. Creationism is understood as an explanation of the existence of the earth, the universe and all that is in it from a biblical perspective. Creationism and the Christian creation story found in the book of genesis of the bible are inextricably tied as it is the creation story that lays the foundation for creationism. Scientific creationism (which will be used interchangeably with creation-science) is the scientific explanation and vindication of the creation story. Creation-science proponents take the bible literally and thus believe in the 6 day creation of the universe ex nihilo. Some creation scientists take a day to be literally twenty four hours while others go for the less literal meanings of the day offered in the bible. Ensuing events in the bible like the flood at the times of Noah is also held as having happened (Ruse and Pennock 128). It is Ruse's position that the beliefs

discussed above that constitute creation-science should not even be understood as a science at all and as thus has no place in the institution of science. The gist of Ruse can be broadly stated as; creation-science is not a science, it is a religion. Ruse even goes ahead to refer to the judge's ruling of the constitutionality of Act 590 in Arkansas in which experts found that creation-science fitted the description of a religion and was unacceptable as a science. Of course this is the watered down simplistic version of the argument; an enthymeme so let us delve into the details. Science has several defining characteristics namely it relies on empiricism, science has laws, science predicts, science is testable and science is tentative. The mainstay of science is its reliance on the empirical; what is accessible to our senses or can measure. It is noteworthy that not all scientific entities are observable but they qualify as scientific due to their consistency with scientific laws and their effects being observed. Closely related to this first characteristic of science is the second characteristic; science is governed by natural laws. These laws are often regular, recursive and immutable. Due to the characteristics of the laws of science, science can predict what happens in nature due to their recursive nature of its laws given certain initial conditions. The inverse of this characteristic is that science can reconstruct happenings thus tell what happened in the past given certain clues. The theories and laws of science should have a mechanism for them to be tested and verified and no knowledge is accepted as legitimate knowledge in science until it passes the rigorous tests. This makes science tentative, the final characteristic of science. Verification of knowledge occurs either by confirmation; which looks for facts consistent with the theory and

falsification; finding at least one instance that the rule or theory does not apply. Creation-science does not meet the criteria for science described above; Ruse contends. The first problem with creation-science is that it purports that the universe was made from nothing through a miraculous process. In science, nothing comes from nothing; only transformation occurs so creation from nothing is inconsistent with science. The creation itself is a miracle, an instant in which the natural laws of science do not apply and thus cannot be explained scientifically, this places the creation of the universe from the creation-science perspective out of the precepts of science thus creation-science is not a science. The creation story clearly states that the Creator of the universe finished all the work of creating the universe on the sixth day and thus following the creation story, it is absurd to study creation as a continuous process. Creation-science offers no explanation about the homology or anatomical isomorphism among animal limbs. Creation-science can neither offer valid predictions nor explanations as it relies on miracles and not laws thus it is devoid of another major characteristic of science. In addition to being barren in prediction and explanation; creation-science offers no data to be tested by confirmation or falsification. Lacking these basic characteristics, creation-science largely exists as a criticism of evolution. The problem with this sort of existence is that creation-science has a fickle position by itself and criticizes evolution not only from an epistemological point of view but also to bolster it and validate its own existence. Finally, Ruse looks at The Creation Research Institute which he says that a condition for membership in this society is acknowledgement, by signing, that the bible is literally true. By committing to this immutable

nature of the bible, scientists in this society lose the character of being tentative; holding opinions according to prevailing evidence. Agreeing to some unchanging standard is unscientific as the “ scientists” will be inclined more to defending their positions than seeking scientific truth. This last criticism feels pejorative and one cannot help noting some use of an ad hominem circumstantial fallacy as Ruse offers no evidence that Christian scientists are less than objective. All in all, Ruse makes a good point as to why creation-science should not be regarded as a science (Ruse and Pennock 324). Works Cited Ruse, Michael and Pennock, Robert. But Is It Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Controversy. New Jersey: Prometheus books, 2008.