Article Side

Ways of Knowing - Scientific vs Religiousness by Roy Fernandez

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The religious and accommodationists frequently rub on "scientism". This is frequently used dishonestly - those using "scientism" will, in the presence of a science defender assert scientism is the claim that science is the only valid vault of knowing about the world and dance frantically when asked to provide a single solitary instance of anyone marginally competent who ever made such assertion. But when given freehand, the fuzzy brigade will write and delightedly screech "scientism" as degradation. The problem here is that there are extremely strong arguments that by any monotonic transitive metric you can conceive, yes whatever science is doing, it IS the best we can do. No other identifiable philosophy, practice, mode of thought or other nameable aggregation of things people do has provided as much power over our lives as science has. Of course science did almost none of it by itself, and many other human endeavors involved, but science provided the root knowledge. It is very likely that where you are now, there is nothing in your immediate environment, including the grass, trees and flowers in your lawn and garden, which has not been touched and substantially improved using knowledge gained from people explicitly trained in and to some knowing extent following scientific practices.

The key issue and problem with the scientism idea and many other derogations of science is that THERE IS NO EXCLUSIVELY SCIENTIFIC WAY OF KNOWING. Not one.

The scientific "way", the scientific method is a way of testing ideas - things that can be known. It's practices that certainly help scientists do so, but it doesn't by itself generate those ideas. Like all other ideas, religious and otherwise, they are generated by human minds. The derogatory screech comes from those who decides that a blue jay harassing the other birds is the incarnation of a demon.

Scientific ideas are only different in that they are discussed, refined, and qualified, often for years sometimes for decades, before they become generally accepted consensus within science.

But those things known to science are not created or known by the practitioners of science in any way any different than any other knowledge available to human beings. The root problem, what the fuzzy thinkers hate is that science and the scientifically literate refuse to accept their ideas on a par with scientific consensus.

So what are the ways of knowing?

1) You can see it with your own eyes and otherwise sense it physically.

2) You can infer it from things you've seen conjoined with previous knowledge.

3) You can ratiocinate pure logic (including math)

4) You can be told it.

5) You can impute it from associative experiences.

7) You can have innate knowledge,

*) Combinations of above.

But leaving aside questions of completeness and discreteness, we can ask is there anything there that is *exclusively* scientific? And the answer is no. Is there anything there which has not become grist for scientific hypothecation? Again the answer is no.

Now there certainly are differences in how likely science is to accept an idea based upon how that idea - that knowledge - can be recreated by other scientists, which make 1,2, and 3 prime candidates for sources of knowledge that become accepted as science, but science has no difficulty accepting that humans (and other animals) do have emotions and that people can categorize them internally with some consistency, and likewise that they can often make valid inferences based upon knowledge which must be there (ala 8) but is not explicitly in what people learn from their senses (we don't ask people if "right" and "left" have changed during the experiment!).

So there is no different way of knowing for science. Only a difference in what will be accepted. With the advent of internet, access to peer reviewed papers is easy. With high speed connections like Cox Internet, these resources can be reached and learning could be continuous.

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Roy Fernandez is a freelancer and an active blogger, he enjoys writing about travel, moving to new places and making it easier by having a moving checklist.

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