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Chapter 2: A Levels-of-Explanation View

Although I hate to sound like a student who blindly agrees with whatever text I am assigned to read, I am overwhelmingly in agreement with most of what Myers states in his View. Myers' main message is that the science of Psychology and the faith of Christianity complement and support each other in many regards. He terms the Bible “The book of God’s Word” and the world “The book of God’s Work”, and states the God’s truth can be found in both. This is part of why I agree so much; I always felt like if you had a strong belief in God then science shouldn’t scare you, it should excite you to see how incredible His work is. He goes as far as saying that it is our duty as Christians to scientifically explore His work because everything that there is to be found is God’s truth. Myers’ continues on by saying that there's a lot of things that psychology and science can’t explain, but that is because it’s not the only perspective we should be looking at. Science and faith can coexist because they are complements to each other; rather than a cause-and-effect relationship where one is needed to explain the other, they are both truths that coincide with and often support each other.

Myers dives into his four complementary truths, these being: rationality and irrationality, self-serving bias and self-esteem, attitudes and behavior, and persons and situations. I was a bit confused when Myers discusses rationality and irrationality, but my takeaway is that because we are human’s all of our explanations are subject to error. We are not God, so while it is rational to be in awe of the intricacies and capabilities of the human brain, it is irrational to believe that the brain has the capability of Godly powers such as omniscience and omnipotence. My biggest takeaway is that we need to acknowledge our humanity at all times, everything we believe to

know is subject to the errors of our humanity. I really enjoyed reading the section on self-serving bias and self esteem because I feel like it's something that often comes up in everyday life. The easiest way for me to summarize it is confidence versus cockiness. Cockiness is akin to self-serving bias; both are prideful and enable to see ourselves as "better-than", even if that means altering the truth. Both are prideful ways of thinking, which Myers points out is the fundamental sin, and both lead to conflicts in relationships with everyone in our lives. Self-esteem on the other hand is confidence; this leads to a security that breeds happiness and security. This is what Christians find in Christ; knowing we are proudly affirmed allows us to find our identity in Him rather than in our worldly accomplishments. This liberates us from pride. When discussing attitudes and behavior Myers states that the way we act influences the way we think and vice versa, they both generate each other. This parallels the Christian idea that faith is a source of action as well as a consequence of action. He takes a "fake it till you make it approach", basically saying that sometimes even when somebody's faith isn't strong, it will grow if they act as though they do. Lastly when explaining persons and situations, Myers says that persons and situations influence each other. Myers states that even "good" people will act not-so-good depending on the situation, and how we expect a situation to be also determines how we perceive it. This agrees with Christianity's view that we are morally responsible for how we use our freedom, and that our decisions in whatever situation matter.

Lastly Myers explains how psychological science both agrees with and challenges faith. He gives a lot of data that shows how Psychological science supports Christian family values. Over and over again it has been shown that children raised by intact families have better overall outcomes than those who don't. I think this shows how God just wants what is best for us: he

wants us to be in loving marriages because it is better for our children, he wants us to forgive others because hate makes us unhappy, I could go on and on but it has been shown that faith correlates to social and personal health and well being. When discussing where science challenged faith, Myers talks about testing prayer. It was hard for me to even fathom people doing this because I thought most people knew that God is not a genie, and he does not grant wishes just because we ask for them. While studies showed no significant effect of prayers, most Christian's can attest to prayer being a great tool for our faith and a way for us to feel close to God. He also talks about sexual orientation and how biological factors are proving very important in understanding it. I also agreed with most of what he says, being that it is something that people don't get to decide and it doesn't matter how they are raised. I have one friend who grew up extremely religious who is gay, and despite staying closeted, going to therapy, and almost taking her life, she still cannot change her sexual orientation. I agree with him that Christians should be more open to accepting varying sexual orientations because I really don't think it's something people are able to control.

A Integration Response to Levels of Explanation by Stanton L. Jones, Jones states that it is our duties as Christians to give His special revelation authority over our beliefs and practices towards reality, and that all of our beliefs should be structured by the Christian faith. He acknowledges the strength in Myers's approach being that he is enthused by good science, because Jones believes that Christians should celebrate good science. From what I read I gather Jones's definition of "good science" as science shaped by faith. Jones's biggest argument against Myers is that he believes that Myers is still separating faith and science by not looking at all of science through a biblical lense. I hope I'm not missing his point, but I disagree. I think that

Myer's makes it clear that science is there to challenge our presumptions, not our faith. I also believe Myer's mentions that much of the bible is subjective, being that it is up for many different interpretations. This means that if something is discovered in science that opposes our faith we should not shoehorn the results to fit into the box of our Christian mindset, but rather we should open our mindset and examine our beliefs.

A Christian Psychology Response to Levels of Explanation by P. J. Watson challenges Myers's definition of psychology. I found this response one of the more difficult ones to understand, but I think a lot of his response is about "persons" and how the definition of "persons" affects the way we view science. He calls Myers's definition problematic because it reflects nonempirical modernist presumptions; he states that by leaving the "persons" out of the definition you are reducing the humanity of it. I initially didn't understand why this was so important, but as he goes on he describes how important recognizing the person really is. I agree with this point, being that the humanity and personhood of psychology is, in my opinion, one of the most complex aspects of the entire science. Watson also argues that Myers's explanation is too optimistic about the "humility" of science, because he says there are many contemporary scientific theories that reject the person and have "imperializing tendencies". While I agree that the way we define a "person" is implicated in our scientific research, I also think that subjective data is subjective data regardless of how exactly we view the person. I was under the impression that it is more important what we do with and how we view the evidence that we are presented with.

The Transformational Psychology Response by John H. Coe and Todd W. Hall has three major disagreements with Myers. The level of vocabulary made this viewpoint difficult for me to

wrap my head around but I think I understood the gist of their response. Firstly, Coe and Hall state that Myer's has an abbreviated view of the object of investigation and not simply supportive viewpoints. Coe and Hall go on to say Myers adopts a view of science that isn't able to address spiritual and mental phenomena and values. Again my understanding of what exactly they're arguing is fuzzy, but I think Coe and Hall are trying to say that their transformational psychology discovers information by studying human nature and behavior, along with studying the scripture.

A Biblical Counseling Response to Levels of Explanation by David Powlison argues that Myers's approach fails to understand people in the end, because he does not go deep enough because he doesn't "think Christianly enough about people ". One point that Powlison makes that I did not agree with was about self-esteem versus self-serving bias. I believe that as human's knowing that we are loved and that we are lovable provide similar senses of affirmation. Maybe I am stuck in my self-serving ways, but when I am at my worst and I remember how loved I am despite my flaws and short-coming, I feel less hopeless and more secure. Powlison argues that Myers's belief reflects our culture's overextended faith in science. I disagree and think that this sounds like somebody who is wary of science and would rather rely on the scripture as a source of truth, not science.

